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PERSONALITY

Sermons

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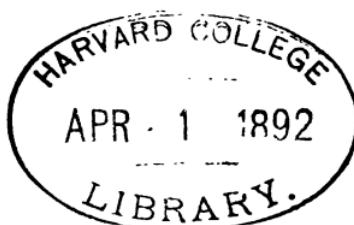
SAMUEL RICHARD FULLER
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The Author.

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NOTE.

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I.

PERSONALITY.

Because I live, ye shall live also. — ST. JOHN xiv. 19.

21 June, 1891.

I.

PERSONALITY.

“BECAUSE I live, ye shall live also,” as if he were to say: “For the same reason that I live, ye shall live also. The ground of your life is the same on which my life rests. The foundation of your life is the same as mine.” The basis of your life is the same as that on which rests the life of God. Your life, therefore, is not a reflection of any other life, is not a reflection of the life of God, is not an imitation of the life of God; your life is real, not an imitation, not a reflection: for the same reason that Christ lives, you may live; for the same reason that God lives, you may live. Your life may be just as real as is Christ’s, as is God’s, may have freedom of the same nature as the freedom of Christ’s or God’s life. This is a marvelous truth, that every human soul has within it the possibility of life, personal, individual life, the entire

freedom of perfect life, as truly as Christ and as God ; "for the same reason that I live, ye shall live also." Personality, then, is the highest achievement in human life. To be yourself is the highest conceivable attainment — to be yourself and live as God lives.

Christ stands the great life of the world because he lived his own life ; because in him was the realization, complete, full, and final, of personality ; because he lived as God lives ; because he lived with the same basis of life that God has ; because his life was not in any way an imitation, nor a reflection, but simply the complete and full expression of what God had implanted there. He lived himself ; therefore, the highest achievement of human life is personality, because it is self-realization, self-mastery, self-attainment, the full and complete expression of all that God has implanted within us. In man there is in personality the highest that is within the knowledge of man. It is the "steepest, loftiest summit toward which we move in our attainment."

Nothing in the realm of physical and scientific research can compare in worth

and significance with this attainment of personality.

Personality, in its absolute condition, as in the life of God, is without limitation ; it is the entire and complete fulfillment of all the forces that go to make up life, so that only in God do we find complete personality. That does not mean that man's personality is without reality ; is derived from outside sources ; that we are the played upon ; that we are but a bunch or collection of certain hereditary traits and tendencies, over which we have no control ; that our personality rests in the finite limitations by which we are surrounded ; that our personality has its ground in those limitations ; that we are the product of a certain environment ; that certain influences play upon us as the chisel upon the marble ; although our personality has, as a matter of fact, its existence among finite limitations, but not its ground in them. Of course, our personality is affected by those finite limitations. It is true that we are constantly taking our cue from other lives, but always to our disadvantage.

Personality in man is impaired in the

same measure in which it is determined from without. It suffers the mutations which exist in the necessary processes of the world. We are content with low views, influenced by other lives, and so our personality is colored by those limitations, but always to our disadvantage. Wherever our personality is affected by our surroundings, or is derived from those surroundings, just so far is it impaired. The example of some one else will never serve for us, because each man is made to live his own life. Each man has his own ground of personality, his own foundation for his own personality, in the same everlasting life that Christ has, that God has. He is made to be a free spirit, an entire and complete realization of the forces that are within him, to be an individual, to have his own freedom, his own life, in his own way. In other words, every human soul, however low, debased, or degraded he may be, is made to live his own life in his own way, and to take hold of his own portion of the eternal.

This is a marvelous gospel to preach to men, that they may live as God lives, as Christ lives, that for the same reason that

God lives, they may live also. It is the glorious gospel of the achievement of personality, of the attainment of independence of life, of self-mastery, the glorious gospel that every man, by the slow, long, and tedious process of individuation may build himself up as Christ is built up, in fullness of assertion and of soul life.

See how this process works. Here are men striving for personality. They scorn imitation, they understand that it is of the nature of limitation. They understand that life is so powerful that it must burst from the restraints of all confining influences; that if they are to live as Christ lives, as God lives, they must express themselves fully and completely.

How glorious, then, it is to think that they may have, as the highest possible achievement in human life, the realization of their own personality. See what this means. See how God loves with that perfect love which knows no hate, which can harbor no shadow of the feeling of resentment; that perfect love which pours out its forgiveness as naturally and as truly upon foe as upon friend, as the outpouring spring pours out naturally the rivulet, the

stream, the river that loses itself in the ocean of its own realization. See that perfect love of God, which holds within its protecting arms every human soul, and in that perfect love see the spiritual force, which is eternal in its very nature ; and as we see this perfect love of God, so we perceive that personality realizes itself in proportion as it is able to take hold of that portion of eternal life which is love ; realizes itself in proportion as it is able to love perfectly, as God loves ; so are we drawn nearer and nearer to God, for the process of the realization of personality brings man always nearer to God. Thus is the bond made more real and more vital which holds us to God. Nay, there is the eternal necessity of striving to love as God loves, in order that we may live as he lives.

Sometimes this comes as a hard message to human souls. Hearts are torn asunder by the wrong-doing of others. Must it not be a hard message to God when we do him despite and shame and wrong, that he must love us ? Yet he does. But as his perfect love holds us, so we are held by that perfect love when we learn to live as he lives.

As of love, so of thought. The thought of God pours itself out as from the fathomless depths of eternal truth. There is the perfect truth that pours out from him so that thought and will are one; that thought which sees, in its all-wisdom, from the very beginnings of every human soul away on to its completion; that thought which realizes itself in absolute and perfect truth. That is the force of personality which finds only its complete realization in God himself.

But as we learn to love as God loves, to think as he thinks, to receive from him the outpouring from those great reservoirs of eternal truth, so are we to become inspired, breathed into, by his eternal thought, so live as he lives, and make our will at one with his thought. Then there follows rightness of conduct, and it cannot be otherwise. Given absolute love and thought, the outcome of those two spiritual forces, love and truth, must of necessity be right dealing, right expression, right conduct; in a word, righteousness.

Do you not see, then, the sublime height to which you may climb, the summit of all human endeavor, which can be

reached by taking hold of those forces of the spirit out of which, as a necessary consequence, there must come right living; right conduct, righteousness, or, in other words, the right expression of the human life according to its own laws, the taking hold by the individual of his own portion of the eternal, and living his own life, in his own individual peculiar way, in righteousness?

I wish I could hold before you the glory of this possibility, the sweetness, the richness, of this attainment of personality. I wish I could make you feel that if you should take hold of God, that is to say, take hold of these eternal truths which go to make up the life of God, that you would then live absolutely, and, living in your own way, would assert your own life, vindicate your own soul experience.

The one thing you are to strive after is to be yourself, not to be another. Every force that God has implanted in you is of the same nature as those spiritual forces which find expression in himself; they are not separated from God even in thought, they are of the same nature and

waiting for the same expression. Is it possible, O infinite Father, that we may be like thee? And Christ gives the answer, "For the same reason that I live, ye shall live also."

Here enters the personal element, the meaning of your life. It is the struggle to be yourself.

Life has no greater meaning than this; it is an effort at self-mastery, self-victory. It is an effort to live your own life. It is an effort to rest your own personality on the same foundation as that on which rests the personality of God.

Because the life of Jesus was so wide-reaching, so profound, so exalted, had such a scope, touched human life so at every point, it was impossible for him to retain within himself any negative force of hate, and because he could love perfectly and truly, it was possible for him to think truly and perfectly as to those great eternal truths which have their influence and effect upon human life.

That we may think truly, we must first learn to love truly. Thought pours out its richest treasure only in the hearts that love the truth. No scoffing man receives great

riches of eternal knowledge; no carping spirit in any realm of investigation receives the richest reward from the great treasure-house of ascertained knowledge; and because Christ loved in such an exalted way, he was able to think truly, to teach truly, to pour out of himself the great teachings of eternal truth which welled up in his soul, and because he was so able to love and to think and to pour out the truth, as a consequence he could make no mis-steps in conduct.

If we could love as he loved and think as he thought, mis-steps in conduct would be impossible. It is because love and thought and will do not have harmony existing among them that stumbling ensues; that transgression of spiritual laws and unrighteousness takes place, and sin, as a many-headed monster, seems to demand that we shall serve it continually. But if we have the perfect love and thought of Christ, then righteousness comes, righteousness in the same way that you and I are made to be righteous; that is to say, "for the same reason that I am righteous, ye also may," nay, "also shall be righteous."

On those sublime heights, then, Jesus

stands, in the complete achievement of his own personality ; stands there as having brought about the ultimate result of that long process of soul individuation by which he is separated from the great mass of human life, so separated as to assert within himself his own individuality and personality ; standing there because of his complete individuation ; standing there as the one man the world has ever seen ; unique, because one with God, and yet it is the same divineness that is held out as the possible achievement of every individual soul,—“for the same reason that I live, ye shall live also.”

From those sublime heights hear the voice of Jesus calling, “Come up here also and be a man.” The call is to every human soul to strive to live its own life as Christ lived his life, to be free from every imitation and thus free from every limitation. See how hate may poison the very springs of your conduct ; how falsehood may, like a viper, envenom the very life-blood of your mind, and make it impossible for you to bring forth all the latent forces of your soul. Jesus calls, “Come up here also and be a man ; be yourself, and be one

with God." Nay, he not only stands upon those sublime heights, but he descends into the gruesome valleys, where we are living with poisoned hearts, unstable minds, unrighteous conduct, and as he would lead the wounded lamb, the bruised soul, as he would bind up the broken-hearted, stanch the flow of blood from the gaping wound, so he comes down from those exalted heights, those heights lit with the radiance of Almighty God, and through tortuous paths, through bramble, and thorn, and tangle, and thicket, he seeks every human soul. His locks are wet with dew, on him are the rains that have poured down upon our hearts and lives, and yet he seeks to take us up to those exalted heights where personality is the achievement of his soul, and is made to be the achievement of ours, also.

I have tried to show you what the meaning of life is. It is to struggle for the achievement of your individuality, your own life, your own personality ; that as God has those great soul forces in full and complete attainment and expression, that as in him there is absolute personality without any limitation, and, in consequence

absolute and complete freedom of spirit, that so in you there is the same ground of life, that "for the same reason he lives, ye shall live also." Then I have tried to show you also how it is that Jesus is the righteous one, because he expressed in himself his own individuality and personality, has taken hold for himself of his own peculiar portion of the eternal; that he is, therefore, unique, and, because unique, he is divine, and, because divine, he is one with God, and, because one with God, he is the manifestation, the revelation, the uttered word of God himself.

I know what a glorious gospel this is to preach to you. I know that when you are conscious of your own peculiarities, nay, of your own temptations, your own hardness of experience, of the heartbroken agony that seems to rend asunder body and spirit, — I know that at such moments you are to remember that those very peculiar experiences of yours are to be treasured as gifts that come from God.

Fancy for a moment Jesus ignoring the peculiar life that he had bestowed upon him. Fancy for a moment his imitation of some other life, his life being influenced in its

development by surrounding conditions, his ever failing to be true to himself, failing to be himself, and you behold the defeat of the soul-struggle instead of the victory of self-mastery.

Bear with me while I say this, that absolute independence must be your aim ; you must strive to live as no other soul has ever lived. God has put a heart in you unlike that of any other being that ever lived. Your heart, your affection, your love, is unlike the heart, the affection, or the love of any other soul that ever lived. As was the life of Jesus, of Paul, as was the life of every great spirit that has been great because of his individuality and asserted personality, and, because of his being great, has been useful, so is the life of every man, woman, and child. You have your own heart, your own love, your own thought, to express in your own way. Thus God lives ; thus are you privileged to live. "For the same reason that he lives, you may live."

You are to express this life in independence. Not in the same way as some other life, not reflecting some other life. Absolute independence in your life is to be your aim.

As this must be your aim in your love, so also in your thought. Check not the inspiration of God by the blending in of your own theory, your own thought. Think after God. Think his thoughts after him. Let him pour his truth into you as he is pouring it out in all its fullness and richness.

No flower is like its companion ; no leaf is like its mate ; no bird sings as any other bird has sung. There are no repetitions with God in his physical universe, nor are there any repetitions in his spiritual creations. Your achievement is to be the attainment of your own personality, to love and to think independently, as he loves and thinks, and with these two conditions your righteousness, that is to say, your conduct, will be unlike the conduct of any soul that has ever been — it will be your own.

It is God's call to you to be unlike your neighbor. His call is, "Come up higher and declare yourself. Stand with me on this height in your own life and in your own way." Standing there, fear is impossible. Who can be filled with fear when he is above the clouds of man's ambition ? Ambitions are but the mist of deadly poi-

son that destroys the soul, and when the soul has reached those starry heights of fellowship with the life of God he has no ambitions and can be attacked by no fears. The courage of a great life ministers to him. Nor on those heights can he be touched by the slings and arrows of malicious tongues, by slander, or by the calumny of vindictive words, for, though he be the chief of sinners, as St. Paul was in his own estimate, God still is calling to him in his great love and all-seeing wisdom to come up higher, and to declare his own love, his own thought, his own life, and so declare himself that he shall at length be righteous.

Men may sneer and scoff at such a soul, but they cannot harm it, as they could not harm the one who endured such a storm on Calvary's mount.

Thus as you have loved and thought after God and with God, so superstition can find no lodgment in your souls. What is superstition? A collection of perverted thoughts, poisonous, deadly notions about God and about the human soul. There can be no torture with God, and if we rightly apprehend him there can be no room for

a false, vindictive God in our thoughts. He shall hold in his loving arms forever the child of his begetting. As God is our father he can never cease to love us, to call to us as does Jesus as he stands on those sublime heights, "Come up here also and be a man." As God loves and thinks, so he will hold us to himself. And the truer we are to ourselves, the nearer we come to him and live more truly and perfectly in him in whom we always live, and move, and have our being.

Take with you to your homes this morning the thought that to be like God is to be yourself, is to live your own life, is to take hold of your own portion of the eternal, your own segment of the circle of eternal life. To be like God is to enter into the freedom of his spirit, is to love as he loves, think as he thinks, act as he acts. Would you be helped to this great consummation? Then take the outstretched hand, the wounded hand, of the brother Jesus whom you have seen, that he may lead you into the eternal presence of him whom you have not seen.

II.

A PERSONAL CHRIST THE ULTIMATE GOSPEL.

**Looking unto Jesus the finisher of our faith.—Heb.
xii. 2.**

14 June, 1891.

II

A PERSONAL CHRIST THE ULTIMATE GOSPEL.

THE ultimate gospel will be the one which shall manifest a personal life of the race, which shall make possible the ultimate triumph of the best there is in human nature over the worst. That is to be the final gospel.

Whether it is Christianity or not shall be determined by the issue. It will be our present Christianity in its substance, if this Christianity is faithful to her Lord; it must be a real Christianity because it must be Christ. The ultimate gospel, the final revelation, must be Jesus Christ.

It will be well, also, for our present Christianity if it be Christianity. It must be Jesus Christ, because he is not only the beginner of our faith, but he is the completer, the finisher of our faith; and he himself, not something said about him,

not a system of theology, not a code of laws, not even a message, but he himself is the gospel, the ultimate gospel, because he himself is that manifestation of the personal life of the race which can make it possible for the final triumph of the best there is in human nature over the worst.

I wish I could make this very clear and to be very deeply felt. I sympathize keenly with that yearning of the human heart for good tidings. Most fully do I sympathize with those throes of the human race which are the very agony of the human soul by which, as in a mine, the rock is let loose and the gold is discovered. I sympathize with all the attempts that men and women are making for a larger and completer life. I feel deeply with that intense desire which is manifesting itself continually to accomplish better, nobler, greater things. I realize how intense is the striving to bring in a new kingdom, a kingdom of righteousness ; I appreciate how we all are longing for a new heaven and a new earth, how every man and woman in his or her best estate is desiring to see the city which hath foundations, longing for the republic of God, is desiring to see the kingdom of

God among men, praying in very truth "Thy kingdom come." And I would say to such, as I must say to myself, that that city of God, that republic of God, that city which hath foundations, that new heaven and new earth can come, and will come, in the only way possible, in the manifestation of the personal life of the race, which personal life shall have within it the elements of the possible triumph of the best there is in human nature over the worst.

I have carefully said "a personal life," because I think that in every uplifting of the human mind there must of necessity be the influence of the personal element. I may not understand the reason of this, — the reason why I may not rise from higher to still higher and more perfect conditions, apart from the aid of any personal element. As I stand and reason theologically, metaphysically I do not find myself able to detect the flaw in my reasoning, in my theory, when I am inclined to say to myself : "I can bring the new life into my soul quite alone, without personal aid."

But still it seems to me that when man

is to grow from strength to strength, manifest larger life, there must be the impetus, the kindling power, the vitalizing force of a personal element.

Soldiers find it so beneath the flag which they are striving to defend. Even those who give themselves to art and music find themselves not altogether free from the inspiring influence of master and teacher, and wherever we find human hearts and wills welded together as by a common purpose, there we find the personal element present, inspiring and building up. It seems to be a law of human activity in its best estate, operative in the development of the best over the worst, that there shall be present, as an impelling and compelling force, a personal force, element, life.

I do not see men and women, as a matter of fact, rise to their highest when this personal element is absent. I can understand how a man in those crises of the national life, when the very fireside is in peril, reading in his newspaper of the necessities of the army, of the call of patriotism, and of the reasons why a man should enlist, — I can understand

how, theoretically, he should say, "I must be a soldier and go to the front." But he does not go. There is lacking the enthusiasm which is kindled by personal influence. I am constrained to believe that God calls forth the best that is within us only through a personal channel, only by the manifestation of a personal life,—a life which shall be the life of the race, which shall make possible the final triumph of the best there is in human nature over the worst,—so only through himself in Jesus, the Christ.

Men may sneer at us in our demand for personal life, may not understand our devotion to a personal Christ; but I think as men grow older that they begin to realize that there is something lacking whenever they are striving for the greatest, apart from this devotion and loyalty to a personal Christ.

I see this in children, in the influence that one boy has upon another: how a high-spirited lad can draw out the best there is in another boy, and inspire him with enthusiasm to accomplish what he thought an impossible task! I see this, as it seems to me, in every phase of human life, so

that I am constrained to believe that, if we are to have a new heaven and a new earth, it must be by the declaring of a personal life, the personal life of him whose attainments in life are of such a nature as to make him, by eminence and by successful expression, the head of the race.

This is the reason why I believe that Christianity is not only the revelation of God, because it is the revelation of Christ, but that it is the ultimate revelation, it is to be the ultimate gospel, and whenever men will cease to build up their own little systems between themselves and God they shall see that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and that Christianity has within it the possibility of being the ultimate gospel of mankind.

Here are some theories you have. You have been constrained to feel that human life would crystallize. You have wrapped about you, like graveclothes, spiritually, certain thoughts, theories, notions, till you have come to substitute your own notions for God's facts, to dwell in your own theories instead of his realities. You see elsewhere that life does

not crystallize. I may bind the tree with knotted thongs, but still the growth will go on, soon the cord will tighten, and, a little later, with a groan and a snap, it will defy my attempts to restrain its life. So with the human soul. You may wrap about a soul confessions of faith, attempt to crystallize it with a theory, make an effort to run it in a mould of some peculiar notion about God; but God himself, who refuses to be held with chains, ever pours out himself as the outpouring of life, as the inspirer of human souls, and goes on living in that soul which you and I have tried to restrain, till there comes a moment when the preconceived notion begins to tighten, there comes a bursting of the bonds, a going forth from the cerements which have been wrapped about the spiritual life, and the risen life walks out, refusing to be bound, defying any attempt at crystallization, and declaring its life as God gives it to it.

It is so with human life in every process, whether physical or spiritual. Human life refuses to be crystallized, to be bound, to be held, to be restrained.

Inspiration is constant. These are days

of inspiration just as truly as any the world has ever seen. Human life cannot be robbed of inspiration. Men and women are as much inspired to-day as they ever have been, and will be more and more inspired as they let the soul fly to its God, and break away from crystallization and restraint, refuse to be bound about by notions and theories, and no longer substitute their own notions for God's everlasting facts.

If I have been perfectly clear that there must be a personal element in every effort to rise to higher conditions in the soul and in the race, that life refuses to be crystallized, that it will burst the graveclothes of any attempt to confine it within the limitations of our own theories and notions, and that the soul must be constantly breathed into by God, then, I think, you are ready to say, when philosophy affirms, "I have found the way, the truth, and the life; I have found how the new heaven and the new earth are to come; I have discovered the kingdom of righteousness and of heaven; I have formulated the ultimate gospel of life; when improvement shall come along the lines

of ethical culture, then men shall reach a sufficient development by which to be fairly judged,"—you are ready to say that while this theory of ethical culture is a theory of real worth, and one which, unquestionably, has done much in aid of truth, yet it lacks at a vital point.

If I go into a chemist's laboratory, he will tell me that the human organization is made up of gases, and will enumerate the constituent elements. It is all true and good just so far as it goes. The theory is sound ; it is all logical ; it can be expressed in accurate formulæ. Let us have a man, then. But it does not work. Who shall breathe into him the breath of life ? It does not materialize the life.

Theoretically, I cannot see any logical flaw in the notions of philosophy in ethical culture. I do not use the term "notion" disrespectfully. Let us see this theory ; it is this : That man in his upward development from the brute attained certain intellectual faculties, facilities, and forces, and out of these has developed certain notions as to right and wrong, which we have denominated conscience. But this dawn of conscience shows itself in a very low state,

awaiting that moment of development when it shall be illuminated with the light of a more perfect day by the sun of righteousness shining into it ; then, as this cultivation of the conscience goes on, there is noted the necessity of observing the rights and privileges of others in the community, and here are the beginnings of what is called altruism — the welfare of our neighbor and of the community. If we could get this highly developed conscience and a recognition of those principles of the welfare of neighbor and state, we should have a more perfectly developed civilization.

This is the theory. But as a matter of fact, there lacks something which makes it possible for a human soul to have its conscience quickened and inspired, and to grow sensitive, and to have its powers of perception whetted so that it may determine the right and refuse to follow the wrong, that it may behold the vision of holiness in its beauty, and behold that vision in such manner as to be captivated by it, — and that something which is lacking, it seems to me, is the personal element.

I look to Jesus, and in beholding him I

am inspired, held by enthusiastic love and admiration, by him who has realized in himself all those redemptive forces which make life possible.

I do not understand the why, and I am not able to detect the reasons ; it seems, however, to be simply true that when we go about our business, actuated only by theory, by notion, by what we calmly determine to be the best, there appears to be lacking something to bring these notions into life.

I am not finding fault with the strivings of philosophy. I find no fault with these theories of the development of the conscience so far as they go, but, so far as I am concerned, there lacks the inspiration of the personal element, that vitality which comes from a person, and makes it possible for man to rise, grow, break away from those moulds, forms, and theories in which he has thus far been content to exist, and I find it in one whose life is the manifestation of the personal life of the race, because I regard Jesus as the human race, the very embodiment of mankind, the one catholic man, and, therefore, with St. Paul, I hold him to be "the finisher of our faith."

I trust you will agree with me; at all events, I must declare it as my message that, as philosophy, with its systems of ethical culture, is lacking, because bereft of this personal element, so also there is something lacking in any system of social science which says, "I have found the new heaven and the new earth, if you will only wait till the logical result shall have been reached of these efforts that I am making toward the improvement of the environment of the race."

I understand how much environment has to do with life. I know it is very hard to live like a man while housed like a brute, to be clean and virtuous when the possibilities of decency are beyond one's reach. I understand it, and with great pity that the environment in many places is such as to shame the privilege of those who know better, who have within themselves the possibilities of making things better, have intrusted to them stored power, knowledge, and wealth, and yet tolerate such environment for a moment, and I bid God-speed to social science as it strives to improve the condition of our fellow-beings. I long to see their efforts reach the desired and de-

sirable result. I understand perfectly well that a comparatively new heaven and new earth are waiting for us when we shall have housed our brothers and sisters only as well as we do now our beasts of burden, and I therefore say God-speed to every effort of social science toward the improvement of the race.

But perfect environment does not make perfect men. I see men clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, with the softness of luxury surrounding them, but I do not always find the highest development of spiritual life within palatial walls. Saints there are there, but their saintliness is not the outcome of their perfect environment. "What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Such live in king's houses. A reed shaken by the wind?" Ah, yes. Such are the lives of many men and women whose environment is indeed perfect, but they themselves are as reeds shaken by the wind, and so shaken that we are compelled to this conclusion, that environment does not make life; that gilded palaces, adorned with works of art and hanging with rich tapestries, do not produce life. Do you not

think so? So that if every city's streets could be made fair, and if every human soul could live in palaces, surrounded by every perfect condition of physical environment, that would not bring the new heaven and the new earth.

Nero fiddling while Rome burns,—a most perfect physical environment, indeed. See him watch those living torches, Christians clothed in pitch, burning as candles to light his summer fête.

It is artificial, dramatic, unreal, to think that the spirit of the sectarian, the spirit of the ecclesiastic, the spirit of the framer of ecclesiastical shibboleths, so that the tongue may trippingly pronounce each article of the confession of faith and not hesitate between sibboleth and shibboleth, the spirit of substituting theories and notions for God's facts, the attempt to confine life, to crystallize spiritual power and force,—to think all this to be vital is indeed unreal!

Men have thought this. One denomination of Christians after another has said, "The new heaven and the new earth" (and has said it with entire sincerity) "shall come when all men and women shall think

as I think, and subscribe to the same confession of faith." There are no exceptions ; it has been so with the Methodist, the Roman Catholic, and the Episcopalian. We have believed, in very sooth, that our theories, our notions, our formulæ, our statements about God, can take the place of God himself.

Christianity is not of Christ when this sectarian spirit seizes it. Christianity is not the ultimate gospel when it ceases to be Christ ; is not the bringing in of the new heaven and the new earth when it strives to make all men conform to a uniform statement of a theory or a notion.

But Christianity is Christ when it sees in him the hope of glory ; when it takes into its life him who is the life of the soul. Christianity is the ultimate gospel, the universal church, the kingdom of heaven upon earth, when it takes the one great catholic man, Jesus, enfolds him to her heart, and strives to grow as he grew, to live as he lived, strives to reflect on earth him from whom is life, strives to have the kingdom of heaven come with great power within the soul and through the race, conquering every negative force,

and finds in him the possibility of the triumph of the best there is in human life over the worst.

Hold forth that hope to human souls and you have preached to them a gospel which must and shall be the ultimate gospel, an inspiration that they are working with God, and that God's working cannot be stayed. You have preached to them him who is the resurrection and the life; him who began our faith by giving us God, who will complete our faith by giving us more and more of God; who shall be the finisher of our faith by giving us the ultimate gospel, by bringing into our hearts and lives that manifestation and unfolding of the eternal life of the universe, God of God, very God of very God, — Jesus Christ.

III.

GOD'S SPIRIT IN MAN'S LIFE.

The Spirit of truth. Ye know him; for he dwelleth in you. — ST. JOHN xiv. 17, in part.

17 May, 1891.

III.

GOD'S SPIRIT IN MAN'S LIFE.

WE know of being by its manifestation, and only by its manifestation. We know the Spirit of Truth because he dwelleth with us and manifesteth himself in us. Every human soul is a manifestation of God, of the Spirit of Truth, is an incarnation of God, for every human soul is a son of God, and the son must declare him; and we know the Spirit of Truth because he dwelleth with us.

Of course, this manifestation of the Spirit of Truth is diversified. It is not the same in every human soul. The pure white ray of light is broken up into many colors, manifests itself in different ways. In one it colors the alpine snows with the delicate tint of the early rose; in another it gives the pansy its color, and so on. Manifestation declares being. I take a jewel in my hand and turn it to the sun's

light, and the color declares its being. So I know the character of the human soul only by its manifestation. Whenever it speaks, then I know what it is, what its character is.

You say, "I know a man by the spirit that is within him. Not always by his achievements, his attainments, but by the spirit that animates him, the motive that lies at the base of his conduct; not by his high flights in the sphere of character, but by the spirit that animates him, the motive of his life." So I know being by its manifestation.

When we come to speak of God, we are speaking of a spirit that manifests itself, and in the complete result of that manifestation declares itself as fully as, with our finite minds, we can comprehend.

So with Christ. We say he is the manifestation of God, the word of God, the declared God, the result of the manifestation of God, therefore, he is the manifested God. We know the character of God by the character of Jesus Christ, because we see in him the complete fulfillment of all that our most vivid imagination can paint as the perfection of character,

of life. So we may call Jesus Christ the manifested God.

There is also the process of manifestation. The Holy Spirit is the process, the operation, and we find the operation of the Holy Spirit declaring itself in us.

How shall we know anything of the outside world save as we study it from within? We ourselves are the only things with which we are familiar, and even here there are great mysteries, but there are also certain tangible facts which concern the individual life; so, when we are striving to seek after God, the argument begins from within. We turn to ourselves and find something there that we may examine, study, and ponder until the mystery of life discovers to us some reasonable and tangible answer. I do not say that we may determine all the truth that is within us, but if we are to search after truth, we are to begin with ourselves. And when we begin the search, what do we find first that is real, tangible? Life.

The surgeon's knife, no matter how skillfully it may cut, cannot find the secret of life. The alchemy of the chemist has failed to discover its secret. There is no

process known to man by which he can discover the secret of life; how it begins or what is its nature. Yet we know that we live, think, feel, have experiences of the soul; and these feelings, thoughts, experiences, and manifestations we call life. We know that we live, because there is within us that nameless something which we call life. You and I know that we possess this mysterious something; are conscious that we live. No one here may tell us that we do not live. We are not able to solve this mystery, but yet the fact remains with us. The being is known by its manifestation, and it is of such a character that we call it life.

It seems to me, we must come to this: either that life proceeds from a living, spiritual source, or that it proceeds from something which is not life. There is this alternative for us. We must say either there is a spiritual source, or a material source. The more I think and study, the more I see these lines run closely together, and it seems to me that men of all shades of opinion are coming to this conclusion, that ultimately even matter, the ultimate molecule, is animated by mind. At all

events, we are to accept, as the only solution that commends itself to our experience, that as lives we spring from life. The manifestation of ourselves is from something of the same nature, proceeds from life; therefore we come to take a spiritual view of ourselves and of the whole universe.

As I walk through the fields, climb over the hilltops, descend the valleys, thread my way through the mazes of the forest, there is one thought that inspires me constantly. It is that I am surrounded by life. Silent life, but silent only because of the dullness of my hearing. "The wonderful noonday silence of a tropical forest is after all due only to the dullness of our hearing, and could our ears catch the murmurs of these tiny maelstroms as they whirl in the innumerable myriads of living cells which constitute each tree, we should be stunned as with the roar of a great city." I am surrounded by life. From life I come; life I express; my companionship is life; my environment is life; every circumstance about me is life. Who shall say that even the rocks do not live? Who shall say that the flower does not live as

the tree lives, that life is absent from any phase of the declared and manifested universe?

We think, and when this process of thinking, this manifestation of life, begins, we say, "God comes." "I think, therefore, I am." Not only that, "I think, therefore, I am a person;" more than that, "I think, therefore, God, the thinker, has entered me, is near me."

Let us go back a moment and say that there is demanded by our reason a unity of God. There must be a unity of God. The time has gone by when men may talk polytheistically as of many Gods, or dualistically as of more than one universe. The time has gone by when the reason will be satisfied with anything short of a unity of God. There must be a unity of purpose and of result along the line of the unfolding of God; a unity of expression, of the unfolding of the will of God, which is only another way of saying there must be a unity of law, and men, feeling the burden of this necessity, are sometimes unable to hear the other demand of the soul, not only this demand of the reason that there shall be a unity, but the demand of the

soul that there shall be personality in this God, that is, goodness, character, the merciful goodness of God.

Oh, how men groan under this burden. They say, "If the will of God, like the wheels of a chariot, rolls on, yet the wheels crush out my life, the roof that shelters me is torn away, the noisome pestilence snatches the beloved child, and all this unfolding of the will of God shuts out the merciful goodness of the Father."

But now the Holy Spirit says, "Abba, Father;" "My own personal Father." This will is also person; is also goodness. Behold the merciful goodness of God, for, even while in the onward movement the physical life is crushed, the spiritual life is thereby made strong. I appeal to your own experience if this is not so,—that when the physical life is crushed your spiritual life is not thereby made stronger, fuller, richer, more abundant than before; if when your soul has passed through a process of development by suffering there has not been also a perfecting that could only be attained by suffering.

The human soul is made like the soul of God, and we can only know the soul of God by its manifestation in Christ.

Suffering is resistance, and the human soul acquires completeness and perfection only by the exercise of the power of resistance over all those processes which make life possible.

Following this line of thought, we are also led to this consideration, that the historic movement is always towards spirituality. This is simply because we are made for spirituality. A hypothesis commends itself to us as truth by its being, or striving to be, a working hypothesis. I cannot value a theory if it will not work. It may be carefully expressed ; it may be a thing of beauty, regarded theoretically, but, unless it works, it is useless. It seems to me that the hypothesis that we are spirits is an hypothesis that works,—that not only commends itself to our reason, but works when applied to our experience.

In the physical process, in the light of the present theory of evolution, what shall we say ? We say this, that from the lowest forms of existence there is a constant upward movement to higher and more perfect conditions, until it reaches man, and in reaching man it expresses itself, not

in materialistic conditions, but spiritually. That is, man is the talking, the thinking, the reasoning, the contemplative being. He is the spiritual being. It is the spiritual which differentiates him from all other forms of existence.

Of course, I understand that there are many of us who do not express ourselves spiritually ; that the expressions of many of our lives scarcely go beyond the manifestations of the animal life ; but we must know that in such a life we are not expressing ourselves truly, that in such a life we are simply linking ourselves with the life of the animal kingdom. Man in his material embodiment may be bound up in the elements that constitute also the life of the vegetable, but if so he was made to spring from the vegetable life into the animal life, and, still further, to spring out of the animal life, to vindicate his right of being as man, as spirit.

This is true, then, of the physical process as it finds expression in man, and it is also true of the historic movement of the race. When the race tends toward spirituality, then it most truly lives. There was nothing spiritual, was there, in the cruel

tortures of the Inquisition? No. Nor did the life of the human race express itself at its best by such barbarities. When man holds his brother in the bondage of slavery he is not expressing his highest and best. Is it not so?

Wherever, then, the human race in its historic development has thrown aside those chains of bondage, — those experiences which link it with the animals, those cruelties, those oppressions, all those things which are “of the earth, earthy,” — then it expresses itself most fully and completely. The tendency in the historic movement of the race is toward spirituality, and when it is not in that direction, then just so much of human life is checked and is not true to its ideals. We do not say that the human race has yet reached the highest point attainable of its spiritual development. This cannot be said while the hand of the brother is on the throat of the brother. We are still, as a race, too prone to express the animality that is within us. Theologians call this “original sin.” It is that which is linking us to that from which we have sprung, and from which we ought to ascend to a higher, a nobler, condition. This sim-

ply shows that man has not attained his goal, but that the onward movement is toward spirituality. It is not until the race, as a race, realizes its possible spirituality that it begins most truly to live.

What is true of the race is true also of the individual. The human soul says, "I am destined for spiritual things." "As pants the hart for the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God." The hunger and thirst after spirituality, the intense desire for holiness, the aspiration for the fulfilment of the spiritual idea that the Holy Spirit shall build us up as individuals into himself, is the tendency toward spirituality which makes life worth living. This is the hypothesis which works. When you are striving after spirituality, then you are beginning to live.

Here is a young man just setting out in life. For what purpose? His foot is on the threshold of life, and he asks himself, "Why am I living?" and he must give an answer to himself that shall satisfy him. No one else can give the answer for him. He stands alone in the world; he is answerable to God. There is a contract between God and him, and there is nothing

in that contract save that he shall meet the conditions and requirements of his spiritual life. There must be an object in his life, a striving towards spirituality. It will not do for him to strive to bring to himself certain comforts, to attain what men call success, but the answer must commend itself to the spirituality that is within him, and in so doing will commend itself to God.

We were born for spirituality, for holiness, for righteousness. As the musician is born to express himself righteously by producing the harmony that is within him, so the human life is born to join the anthem of angel and archangel, to express the harmony that God has already placed within the soul. We are born for these things, and when we are not seeking after them we are thwarting God.

The Holy Spirit comes as the manifestation of God. He comes to us as our energy. This energy of our souls, this energy that belongs to our souls, is not there as an accident; it belongs there. This energy of the Holy Spirit in you expresses itself as inspiration. Yes, every human soul stands ready to be inspired.

This is a solemn truth : every soul stands ready to be breathed into by God, inspired so that God may make clear his purpose, his will, his unfolding of the life, his fulfillment of spirituality. Oh, let no human soul shut out this holiness which is striving to inspire with truth, with light.

We read how the Holy Spirit strove until he inspired the sinner David, till he burned out by the fire of his great holiness and truth many of the seeds of sin in him who was both murderer and sinner against God, till, as the result of that inspiration, we have some of those beloved Psalms, which serve as balm to your souls and mine. See how this same Holy Spirit strove with the persecuting Saul, to inspire him, to stay him in his persecuting journey, to strike him to the very earth, as sometimes he does strike other souls to the earth, that he may make the persecuting Saul the adoring Paul. He is taking away your treasures, calling a halt to your onward movement, that he may inspire you to turn from your cold-heartedness into an adoring and loving child.

The day of inspiration will never cease. God is as ready now to inspire your soul

and mine as he was to inspire Isaiah, or David, or Paul, and because we do not receive his inspiration is not that God is not ready and waiting to give it, but because we still let our hearts remain hearts of ice, and will not receive sufficient melting influence.

In one of the glaciers near Chamounix the hand of man has cut a grotto. You may live within that grotto, as some men have cut within their own souls a chamber of retreat wherein they live. The sun in heaven does not shed its rays into that grotto of ice, and the Sun of Righteousness does not reach the chamber cut by men in their souls. Yet it is not man's normal state that he should dwell so. The sun waits to pour down upon the life within that ice grotto that the life may grow and express itself, and the Sun of Righteousness is waiting to pour down the life-giving energy of his own holiness into your heart and mine, and is calling on you to come out of the ice grotto.

He waits to inspire. He calls to life. His energy expresses itself as inspiration. He makes you to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the superb righteousness of

God. . The Holy Ghost is striving to work in you the fullness of the glory of Christ.

You are going now to your homes, and what shall you find there? The old life, with its ice grotto where you may hide yourselves? Or shall you find within those homes a temple of the living God? Shall you throw open the windows of that temple and let in the inspiring energy of the Holy Spirit, that he may burn out as with a fire all the dross therein? For "our God is a consuming fire."

When those windows are thrown wide, will you receive him, the Spirit of Truth, whom ye know, "for he dwelleth with you"? Thus you dwell with Jesus and with God. His holiness inspires you. The convicter convinces you of sin and of the grandeur of righteousness; convinces you of the possibilities that lie within you; calls to you to come up higher; and you responding to that call, will you dwell with him who dwelleth in you, the Spirit of Truth whom ye know?

IV.

RECONCILIATION TO GOD BY APPREHENSION OF GOD.

All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. — 2 Cor. v. 18.

28 June, 1891.

IV.

RECONCILIATION TO GOD BY APPREHENSION OF GOD.

THE world is reconciled to God by the apprehension of God. The world, that is the human souls that go to make up the world, are to be reconciled, transformed, by the apprehension of the nature of the life, that is, the personality of God. There is no other way. Reconciliation is transformation. The world must be reconciled, or transformed, to God through the personality of Jesus Christ, by the apprehension of God.

As the highest achievement of man is his own personality, that is, the realization of his own life, and as his truest education is the development of his idiosyncrasies, the fulfillment of every latent force that there is in him ; or, we might say, as the highest achievement of man is the preserving intact of the only capital he ever has in

time or in eternity, or, better, I think, the making the highest and best use of that capital,—so the personality of God tends ever toward its own end, that is, toward the fulfillment of his own purpose, which is none other than the reconciliation of every human soul to himself.

In other words, the purpose of God,—toward which his own personality tends without conflict, because there is no conflict in perfect personality, as there is conflict in our imperfect personality, which is affected by our finite limitations,—the purpose of God is the fulfillment of his own life, through the spiritual processes, and that purpose is none other than the transformation of every human soul, of every phase of human life, to his own likeness.

What a glorious sweep of truth that is, that as our finite personalities are tending through long, slow struggles toward realization, that as man's ascent is ever through conflict, so God, in the infinite calm of absolute personality, is fulfilling the end of his own being, in the transformation of every phase of human life unto himself. This is the truth that St. Paul grasped so firmly, that we are made to re-

flect the glory of God, to fulfill in ourselves the realization of the divine personality.

Thus the reconciliation of the world is by the apprehension of God, because man is made for God, for nothing short of God. In our feeble struggles, our human life seems unreconciled to anything, even to itself, to its own desires, its own purposes, aims, and ambitions. With us human life is a seething caldron wherein bubble all sorts of efforts, and it will ever be so until its endeavor is upward; until its strivings are for ascent; until its purposes are concentrated on the one struggle that is worthy of it, namely, the realization of its own personality; until it strives to enter into the fulfillment of its own being; until it be transformed, at least in its purpose, to the likeness of God.

The relation between God and the soul is real and vital. As we realize ourselves, so we come into the realization of the vital bond that unites us with God. When we lose sight of that, life becomes unreal, arbitrary; revelation, so far as we apprehend it at all, becomes dramatic; we talk of things about God, and fail to realize the nature of God himself.

If what I have said commends itself to your judgment, you will see that man's reconciliation is first through knowledge, and afterward by growth; that we must know God; that there must be to the human soul the revelation of God, the laying bare of the very nature of God; that there must be the declaring to the human soul of God,—not of things about God, but of God himself.

This revelation of God is seen in the external processes, those movements of life which we call history. For example, I suppose that not all the obstructing combination of the armies of man could have ultimately thwarted the abolition of slavery. We see, as a matter of fact, in those external processes of life, that is, in history, the laying bare of an eternal righteousness. The more carefully we try to solve the depths of the philosophy of history, the more we see that this righteousness marches on and may not be checked, stayed, or ultimately thwarted; that in its own power it is invincible.

As we see this in history, so, I am constrained to believe, we see it in the internal processes which we call human con-

sciousness. Man feels that the call within himself, as soon as he stops to think, is to higher and still higher steeps of life; that there is within him a force, a power, which makes for righteousness. Whenever this power is obstructed, hindered, or temporarily thwarted in any way, there is a revulsion effected which is produced by that which is not true, so that he feels that there is a revelation, outside and within, of a power which makes for righteousness. It would seem, then, that because this power makes for righteousness it must be true, for that which makes for right is clearly true. It is not only true, but is something with which we have a vital kinship. Touch the electric current, and you have established a vital kinship with it, and when we come in contact with this righteousness in the historical processes, we find its result to be along the lines of truth.

No man for a moment calls in question the truth of freedom, the falseness of slavery, nor doubts that if there were righteousness in the universe, it must ultimately crush slavery, abolish bondage, and establish freedom. This power within man, if it be a power for righteousness, must es-

tablish righteousness within him, and not only establish it, but in the establishing of it man must feel its truth.

If we are to have our lives transformed to the life of the universe, or in other words, to be reconciled to God ; if we are to be brought into sympathetic contact with those great spiritual forces that sweep on through human life, we must begin in our study with ourselves. I may not begin from without ; I must see what is here. And here within me I find, or believe I find, a power working for righteousness, which brings a certain amount of satisfaction and peace ; and in the processes outside of me I see these processes also tending toward righteousness, and it establishes at least the probability, within my mind, that there is something in the universe absolute in its righteousness, with which the soul of man has a natural and a vital union and fellowship, so that when he comes into sympathetic contact with that life, peace follows, harmony is established, and progress asserts itself.

Hence this reconciliation must first be by knowledge, and afterward by growth. Knowledge comes by reflection. I have

anticipated that already. You begin to think about God, to reflect upon certain clearly recognized principles within yourself, and one of these principles is righteousness. When a thinking man begins to ponder the subject of righteousness, he finds it to be a quality of positive truth. In business, men say, "Let the word be as good as the bond," indicating that man recognizes within his constitution a certain element of right which is of the nature of positive truth. Therefore this recognition of God in the human consciousness is first by reflection. Do not fear, then, the man who thinks. He may think perversely ; his thoughts may be distorted, his logic lame and halting ; his conclusions impotent : but it is something that the great depths of human thought have been stirred ; that the angel of reason has come and touched the waters of his mind ; for out of these depths, muddy though they may be, there may yet come the clear reflection of the divine truth.

Reflection, then, is the first thing by which the human consciousness comes into the knowledge of God. Nurture your thoughts. Be not afraid of the conclusions

to which they may carry you. The very first step is to open the mind's eye that it may get some glimpses of the divine truth. So the revelation of God (I may not say from God, because it is primarily of God) is the laying bare of the very nature of God, and that revelation comes to the human consciousness through the avenue of reflection. As reflection is but a function of the reason, so there is another function of the mind which seems to me as clearly established as reflection, namely, the function of faith. I believe faith to be a faculty of the spiritual life, the soul life, just as truly as I consider reflection to be ; and the next avenue of the apprehension of God is through faith, where the scope of man's vision is enlarged, where his horizons are broadened, and where, resting on reason, he takes hold with a firmer grasp of a larger outpouring of truth by the exercise of that faculty called faith.

Faith does not ignore reason. Reason is the place on which the first rung of the ladder rests, and faith climbs that ladder till it comes nearer to the face of God.

As reflection and faith are the channels through which God reveals himself, so also

are the experiences of the soul. Here is a little child, and he strives in his little childish way after righteousness. He begins to realize that there is such a thing as right conduct, as well as right thought, for children's notions are sometimes much clearer and truer than we imagine. This child begins to apprehend the very nature of the righteousness of God. He begins to realize that his little forces are being reconciled to the great life of God, and as he passes through these processes, when he becomes old enough to think, he finds that he has been living as a child of God, and realizes that the soul experiences through which he is passing are teaching him more and more of that fullness of life for which his soul thirsts and is hungry, and he is filled, satisfied, whenever God comes into his heart. Watch your own child. See when the moment comes in his life that he comes to you with a new light that never was on sea or land shining forth from his soul, and tells you that he wants to serve God; then you see that there seems to come within his soul a realization of a larger and fuller life, and you seem to be standing in the very presence

of God. So near to God are little children.

When we have this revelation of God as it comes to us from reflection, faith, and soul experiences, we realize that it is in relations. You cannot separate God from life—it is absolutely inconceivable. You cannot, as it were, separate this life of the universe from relationship. Isolation is death. Life standing alone always dies. Take away from the rose the sunshine, the rain, the dew, the light, those many fellowships and relationships which stimulate its life, and you have death.

Sometimes men begin to realize what sin is because it is always a cutting off, a separating process, a process whose logical end must be isolation, and therefore "the wages of sin is death." The thief is cut off from companionship, the murderer is held behind prison bars. Every transgression of the moral and spiritual law is, in its result, isolation, and isolation is always death.

We cannot, then, have a separated God; we cannot say or think that there is not a vital union with him. The existence of God must always be in relations. There

is a profound philosophy in that simple statement, "I believe in God, Father and Son," and when we undertake to establish the principle of the foundations of national, family, or church life, it must always be on the principle of relationships.

This leads one to say that this revelation of God must also be the revelation of a being who exists, not for the sake of mere existence, of mere being, of a mere struggle for being, but for another. This is a paradox which puzzles people. They have tried to reconcile selfishness and self-realization. But man knows that there is a vast difference between the two, and he realizes the profundity of the truth of the saying of our Lord: "He that loseth his life shall find it." The very foundation of self-realization is the living for another.

Thus we find this revelation of God coming to us as a being in relations, and also as a being realizing itself for another. If it is to be true to human experience and reflection, it is not only to be a revelation of God in relations, and as a being existing for another, but it is to be a revelation of the divine fullness as we see it in that precious parable of the prodigal son. Hear

the words of the Father as he says, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." All there is of God is to be poured out into the human soul ; the life of the universe is to touch the human soul in every phase and at every point of its experience, because it is the life of relations, because it is the life of a being existing for another ; because it is the life of divine fullness. Its beginnings are always in love.

Reconciled to God ! Do you not see how it is to be accomplished ? It is by the human soul lifting its face, raising its vision, opening its eyes, and beholding in clear knowledge, through reflection, faith, and soul experiences, the life of its Father, the life of him whose child he is, the life of him who in divine fullness and richness is pouring himself into his heart. It is that God through knowledge is developing the soul in the larger life which comes through growth, through the Christ the Son of God, through the mediation of the Spirit, for it is a revelation of life to life, of spirit to spirit, of spiritual life to spiritual life.

As man's achievement in its highest expression is the realization of his personal-

ity, and as the personality of the universal life tends ever toward its own fulfillment in the reconciliation of all life to himself, so this revelation of God is in a person, through a person, by a person.

The revelation of God, then, is through the moral order, through personal channels; not through physical processes, in which, because of the limitations of our finite experience and knowledge, there is, apparently, dualism, but through a moral order, through a person. Through personality God comes to the human heart in his own likeness. He reveals himself. Revelation is light,—not a reflection of light, not a refraction of light, even, but light itself, and needs no cumulative argument to sustain it. God lays bare his own heart, and man feels the power in himself that works for righteousness. In his own consciousness a man contemplates that power. His faith takes a larger grasp, and in that power he sees the divine life; and in the processes of his soul's experience he sees in that divine life the same ground of life and existence in himself, and beholds in figure the face of the personal God, his own Heavenly Father.

Whenever truth becomes unfolded, then there is a realization of freedom. The whole truth gives whole freedom. There can be no contradiction in truth. I may not say, "This is of God and this is of nature;" all things are of God, and every truth that man takes hold of in the physical or in the spiritual processes, whether he calls himself scientist or philosopher, or whether his spiritual nature calls out and takes hold of a single element of truth, wherever truth is apprehended there is at least one letter that spells out ultimately, in God's good time, the very nature of God. Thus grows the alphabet of the knowledge of God. Nothing can bring about this knowledge of God, this reconciliation of the world, save truth in its absolute fullness, in its entirety.

It seems to me that every unfolding of the life of God comes as naturally, as reasonably, as if it could not have been otherwise. There seems, when looked at aright, nothing arbitrary in this revelation of God, nothing unreal, nothing dramatic, nothing that might be changed without shaking the foundations of all reason, of all faith, without stultifying all human ex-

perience, without going flatly in the face of all progress, for to be is to progress, and the soul that most truly lives is the soul that has taken hold most firmly of the very chariot wheels of the soul's development, and is speeding on with lightning pace into the very presence of him who is all truth.

I stand now on the shores of Galilee, and I see a humble peasant approaching. My soul asks, as may sometimes yours, "Why do I call him the Son of God?" Why? Because I discern in him truth and light; and this is a sufficient answer. I enlarge that answer, however, though his truth needs no argument, is self-evident: in him is the laying bare of a soul, of a life, of a personality, a soul that exists in relations, who laid the foundation of that glorious conception of the universal brotherhood of mankind.

This same Galilean peasant, — see how like God he is. He needs no argument. He is a manifestation of truth, and the soul feels it in coming into his presence; realizes it; cares nothing for the argument from design, from the miraculous, from the validity or authenticity of documents;

stands safely in the presence of this personality, this soul, whose very being is the laying bare of those principles which we have found to be of the very nature of God,—till the soul feels that it is standing in the presence of him who is none other than the Son of God.

Wherever man as man, wherever the race as a race, has taken hold of this life of Jesus Christ, there has been the most stupendous and overwhelming onward movement of righteousness among men, and wherever men have failed to recognize this life of Jesus they have been overtaken by unrighteousness, defeat, and shame.

Who was it that stayed the progress of the abolition of slavery? It was those who failed most to realize the divine life and fellowship of this Jesus of Nazareth. In the name of Christianity, some, mistaking the very nature of Christ, tried to prove the divine origin of slavery, but he who was larger than his creature confounded the clay of his own making, and made his righteousness triumph, as necessarily it always must.

So with the individual consciousness. Wherever an individual soul has taken

hold of this life of Jesus he has been the more filled with the life of God. It is a fair test. He who has within him the most of the outpouring of Jesus finds himself most filled with God. Point by point we might show this application : as in relationships, so in the living for another, giving his life for others ; and as in the living for another, so in that larger realization of all life he stands in the presence of him who is the laying bare of truth and of light.

Christ, therefore, is to me the revelation of God, the revelation in personality, the only way, it seems to me, God can come to my soul ; and because he is the revelation of God, because his life is truth and light, we are reconciled to God, transformed to God, made into the likeness of God—changed from glory to glory through this same Galilean peasant, this Jesus, the carpenter's son, this brother, this human Jesus, this Son of God, who has become the son of man that he might lay bare the life and light of his eternal Father.

The reconciliation of the world, then, is through the knowledge of God, through the apprehension of God, through the

upward conflict and struggle of the soul, through experiences, through the life of Christ ; and it is the work of the one Holy Spirit, who, with the Father and the Son, is ever one God. The soul's life, its beginning, its end, its destiny is in him in whom it finds reconciliation, by whom it is changed, transformed, and passes from glory to glory. O God, thou art my God. In thee is my realization ; in thee, O Christ, is my reconciliation ; in thee, O Holy Spirit, I live and can never die.

V.

THE BIRTH OF THE SOUL.

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. — ST. JOHN
iii. 6.

II October, 1891.

V.

THE BIRTH OF THE SOUL.

THE birth of a human soul, its growth, its progress, its fruition,—these are the thoughts which at one time or another command the most earnest consideration of every human life. There come moments when we look into our natures to learn their great secrets, to understand what we are, to strive to solve the great problems which seem to confront us. It is a moment when one seems to say to himself : “There is something more in me than nerve, muscle, bone, sinew, and flesh. There is something in me more than that which makes me kin to other growths, whether physical or of another sort, in the natural world ;” a moment when one seems to say to himself, “That which men call a soul I think I have,” and the instant that thought comes to a man he is asking himself, “What is this soul ? What is its end ?

How does it come? How does it grow?
What are the stages of its progress?
What is its destiny?"

I do not say that this is a joyful moment in any man's life. Sometimes it is an hour of great pain, this hour of introspection, of self-realization; this moment when there is crowded upon him the necessity of a great question, of the demand of a great answer. "What am I?" "What am I to be?" I sympathize most profoundly with the agony of such moments. I think I understand somewhat of the pain of such an hour, and it is because I wish to soothe that pain—not to remove the cause of the pain, but, by giving greater strength, that from within the soul may rise above its pain till it cease in its torture—that I ask you to think with me for a moment something of the nature of this soul.

It is a common heritage that we have. Your soul and mine are fundamentally alike. It is a common stream of everlasting life that pours through your soul, through mine. It is a common story there told, a common experience we share, a common struggle we make. Together we live, together we struggle for life, together

through soul-trials we may reach the consummation; so that what I read within my soul must be, to a great extent, true of yours; what you read in yours must be capable of serving me.

Here is a soul; whence it comes we ask not, but, if an institution is the lengthened shadow of a man, so is the human soul the prolonged life of the centuries. It bears the mark of ancestry, that mysterious law of heredity. It is the gathering up of much which has gone before. A man lives the life of his ancestors, finds within himself powers, and energies, and impulses, and tendencies which startle him in their manifestation. He cannot tell whence he has come. He only regards himself here as the beginning of a great soul striving to express itself. Marked by the avalanche, so to say, of histories preceding him, by many generations and centuries, there are great lines left upon his soul, as on the mountain sides the sliding glacier has left its deep cuts; preceding histories and centuries have engraved themselves upon it, so that every human soul bears somewhat of that which has gone before.

The realization of this sometimes over-

whelms him. He is stunned by the great forces that are contending within him. Sometimes it is a force of great brilliancy, and as a little child he manifests powers which are stupendous. Fancy a great poet, almost before his infant lips can speak without lisping, expressing thoughts that must strike those who listen to him by reason of their unusual power. How came this child to such knowledge, never having learned? How is it sometimes with the soul of a little child? He seizes the brush and paints, and produces on the canvas a work powerful in its majesty, its brilliancy, exceeding the work of other men who have toiled for years without reaching such results. How is it sometimes that those of mathematical powers, powers of invention, powers of discovery, seize the hidden forces of nature and tear aside the veil that hides the great mysteries of life and discovery, and reveal to admiring and wondering eyes secrets never dreamed of? No man seems to be able to solve this. Suffice it to say, that there is a piling up of great powers and forces through generations and centuries by this which we call the law of heredity. God is working in a mysterious way "his wonders to perform."

So you find sometimes within yourselves forces that startle you and confound you. Sometimes these forces lead you into great sin ; sometimes they help you to a sublime sense of spirituality and to great demands in righteousness. Sometimes they hurry you to crime, or lead you into philanthropic fields, where with the hand of blessing you comfort all those who come within the reach of your holy and gentle life. In the one case, as much as in the other, you are startled, stunned, by the powers and forces that are there. In the one case you are able to see clearly where other men do not see, or are blind where every one is crying out : "Do you not see ? Is it not beautiful ?" stumbling, halting, creeping, where other men are walking with strong, mighty strides. In the one case, as in the other, you are at a loss to account for the forces that are within you.

The realization of this seems to me to be the coming to the birth of a soul. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." No man knows how it is born, where it is born, what is the process through which it passes. The soul manifests itself and we see the manifestation, but more we cannot tell.

We do know this, that here is a ground of courage, of hope, of pity, of charity.

When I see a soul beating against the bars of its cage, striving, longing for freedom, yearning to take the wings of the morning that it may fly where it may reach its true atmosphere, though the beating against those bars be what is called sin, however bitter the struggle, though it cripple and wound the poor soul striving, panting for its life, yet I shall be filled both with pity and with hope ; then, though I see the soul steeped in its blood because of this beating and striving, see it overcome apparently, thrown back upon itself by reason of its sin, yet I shall say, "It is born for escape, for freedom," and I shall have a ground of hope that the bars shall one day be broken, and the soul shall escape to its greatest liberty.

Your souls are struggling. Yes, the souls of the greatest saints of whom we know anything have struggled. St. Paul looks within himself and finds there forces warring one with one another, and how great is his distress ! How all the great spirits of earth are staggered by what they see within themselves ! Even these forces within man

may be perverted, but still they are great forces. The force that leads a man to sin may yet become the power that shall lead him to holiness. The force may be latent, but there it is, and the power stuns, or the lack of power confuses and confounds, and as a weakness or as a strength seems to strike the soul with awe as it asks the question, "What am I?" Those forces which St. Paul found warring within him brought, I doubt not, great discouragement, as when he says: "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." So to-day there are many who are thrown back upon themselves in a long and apparently fruitless struggle for life, and become faint-hearted, discouraged, cast to the earth in despair. But it is not right for us to be discouraged, faint-hearted, conquered by despair, for we are not alone. Every soul in one way or another has been thus torn by the warring within. This is no new conflict, no new panting, no new effort, no new manifestation of strange powers as they come to the surface. It is the bubbling up of the great wellspring of life striving for an outlet here through the reeds or grasses of forbidding and hindering conditions,

there bursting the banks of law, but finally settling into its rightful channel.

Here are the great streams of tendency that have been pouring themselves through human souls down all the centuries, and now they come within our souls. There, perchance, they seem to throw off only currents of sin and death. No, they are the streams of life, and are persistent in their manifestations, and will sooner or later burst the bounds that seem to hem in the soul, and the soul shall yet find its expression. It is where your soul, though now, apparently, dammed up, limited, hedged about by that which seems to be altogether of sin, of obstruction, of death, shall one day, nay must, by the very persistence of all streams as they come from mountain fastnesses and find their level in the ocean, find its complete entire development and fruition. It is the gospel of good cheer that Christ preached when saying in another figure : "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." It is the gospel of good tidings which he preaches when he says : "I am come that ye may have life, and have it more abundantly." It is the gospel of good tidings that the lifestream,

coming from the one source of all life, coursing through human souls, shall express itself. Let him that will, drink of the fountain of life ; it is there for all to partake.

Sometimes this moment of realization comes to a man in his childhood, sometimes not till middle age, sometimes not till far advanced in old age. But come one day or another it surely does. Forces within him contend, warring forces, jarring elements, all striving for harmony, peace, harmonious expression ; yet such a tangled skein is the life of human souls that we seem to lose all hope that the thread of life may ever be discovered, or that our lives may ever become peaceful, or the music of our soul, the anthem of the praise of a great life, ever be restored. But to all such, to all who are in an apparent state of hopeless jargon, shall come a stirring of the great depths ; out of it all shall come a realization of what they are capable ; they shall awake to the fact that they have a soul, and when they come to that glorious moment of awakening, then they strive to prove their souls.

Remember, as you must, that the stream of remote generations has poured itself

into you, and through you it shall find its channel, and shall one day justify its being. So we sometimes see our dearest friends go down, lost from sight, into the bogs of wasted life, dissipation, sin, yes and crime, and what are we to say? Say only this, that the soul has gone down into the depths, only one day to appear again to find he is a soul; and when that moment comes, the remainder of his days are passed in the effort to assert it and in the striving for its realization.

There is no soul that can be lost; the Father's eye is sleepless, and watches over every spiritual being that he has called into existence. Nothing beclouds his vision. We may shut out our view and no longer raise our eyes to see the Father's face. By the mists of our indifference, by the great thick darkness of our willful transgression, we may shut out from our souls the light of his countenance, but his eye ever discerns the soul which is his, the child of his own creating.

Then the moment of the struggle of realization comes.

"I go to prove my soul !
I see my way as birds their trackless way.

I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In his good time!"

Oh, in ascending the mountain one foot of the climber is always lagging, and when that lagging foot speaks it speaks of despair; it says: "Once I was leading, once I was achieving. I placed myself on firm ground, and there was the upward movement, progress, and acquisition, and the joy that came in that feeling of spiritual attainment; but now, lagging far behind, overcome, apparently, by the difficulty of the ascent, I am in despair." Oh, how many such souls there are to-day, men who strive to live, to climb! Now they say: "It is useless; I have slipped back; these forces have pulled me down, thrust me back; I have no power of holiness within me." But it is but the lagging foot. No greater obstacle confronts you now than in the past; the movement of the soul is ever upward and onward, though, apparently, at times it may seem to be downward, and, therefore, seem to be hopeless.

Physical temptation comes to you again, and with shattered nerve you go down the

hill of your dissipation, and what do you say? Oh, say that the day is yet to dawn, the nerves are yet to grow strong, renewed health is to come to you, God is leading you through a soul process no more difficult to endure than that through which you have already passed. Be of good cheer. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The process is painful, but it is sure. Courage, now and always! I deeply sympathize with the one whose physical temptation masters him again and yet again, but you rest in the sure knowledge that it is yet to pass, you are yet to be set free. Or the mental trial comes, and the old doubts reassert themselves, but once again the Father's face, through the fog of your mental difficulty, is yet to shine. The spiritual temptations assert themselves over and over again, till in the slough of utter helplessness you seem to be lost. But the soul is still passing through processes and a larger hold upon spiritual life is yet to be yours.

Can you afford, then, to give up the striving? Do you not realize how these forces are within you, that they shall yet find an awakening, that you shall discover

your soul has growth and progress, and that the progress cannot be without these inspiring soul-catastrophes? There cannot be the great mountain ascents without the striving and without descents into the valleys intervening between the hills. There cannot be great strides of progress without the lagging foot, without discouragements. Discouragement is a part of the process of progress.

Do you not see, then, that the soul grows not as trees or flowers, though these serve as an analogy? The tree does not sink as it rises, save as it thrusts down its roots till it finds the moisture, the nourishment, its life requires. But with the soul there is a going back, but only that the now lagging foot shall soon spring forward.

So, at one time or another in his life, the moment of realization, of soul-striving, comes to a man. It is a time, however, of pruning, of cutting back the life, of putting in the curb and bridle, the time of checking, of a formative process where the forces of the soul are to be shown their highest and best development, and these processes cannot be without pain, and moments of discouragement, suffering, and

momentary despair. If the marble shrieks as the biting chisel forms to greater beauty the angel that is yet hidden, so there cannot be the formative process of our soul's life without pain, suffering, sorrow. But that process leads, by reason of the forces at work, to higher and still higher manifestations. These processes of the soul are to lead to the time of fruition. It is a great era in the soul's life first, when it awakes to its realization ; second, when it strives after expression ; and still a greater era when the soul sees itself bear fruit. It is the stage of its fruition, when it begins to bless, to help, to encourage, to stimulate, to vitalize other souls.

Oh, what a blessed moment of soul-experience when the life that is within you is giving life to others ! What is it that has exalted Jesus to the great throne whereon he blesses other souls, and at whose foot souls lift their hearts in adoring praise ? It is the life that has streamed from the source of all life into his great soul, so filling him to the full in complete realization of all the vitalizing forces of human life, that he pours out from this overflowing fountain of spiritual attainment the

riches and the richness of an exalted life, of a life that finds its complete oneness in him, the author of our being, the source of eternal life, — God.

As this fruition shows itself in Christ, so it does in other souls. What has sometimes given you courage but the blessing of a mother's great life, or the tender spirit of your father? What is it that has sometimes given you renewed hope and a strong grasp upon the great effort your soul is making to attain higher flights of spiritual being, but the outpouring of the full life of some friend who has himself gone down through those dark, hideous valleys, who has taken the warring elements in his soul and brought them out of chaos into order, out of confusion into harmony, so stemmed the great tide of contending streams within his soul as to give them the proper current and manifestation of their being? This great soul of your friend, now having reached, in its progress, fruition, is pouring out upon you the greatness of his own life. Such was St. Paul's. What animates the world in the influence he has poured out but the fruition of that life? he found in the beginning these warring forces, he

strode that he might so preach that he himself might not be a castaway, he saw the great value of his soul, and pressed toward the mark that he might win the crown of everlasting life; and in the winning of that crown, see how he has been a fruitful blessing to generations then unborn, so marvelous are the ways of the Spirit,—for “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

The day of your fruition, perchance, is dawning now. I know not but it may be high noon in some of your souls. You may not know it either. The greatest souls have not known when the hour of their fruition had come. They did not know that the midday light was shining in them, did not realize that they were being life-giving to other souls. It may be now in the moment when you are suffering most that you are in the full blaze of a glorious day of fruition, and are blessing other lives most abundantly.

There stands a soul. Oh, how precious it is, what forces are centred within it! See how the souls of many centuries have poured themselves into it. Shall you not, as you contemplate your soul, take courage? Shall you not be unwearied in your effort

to assert it, to seek its highest and best realization? Shall you not count all this pain, discouragement, and despair as nothing, as only the price you would gladly pay for the great joy and privilege of one day so bearing fruit that other weak, thirsting souls may from you find new courage, strength, hope? Are you not willing to pay this price, willing to suffer that others may be strong, willing to live and take great holds upon life that you may bless those who with you are panting to get free, struggling against the bars of their prison-house to let their souls soar to greater heights?

Do you not believe that the crucified Lord must have had a joy unspeakable in knowing that from him there was flowing, as his blood streamed down, a life-giving current which was to vitalize all spiritual beings world without end? Do you not believe that St. Paul was entirely sincere as he recounted shipwreck, the bitterness of foe, the falseness of friends, much of suffering, and rated them as nothing for the joy that was set before him, the joy of being a blessing and a life-giving energy to generations yet to come?

It is thus I appeal to you to prove your souls. I will not appeal to the cowardly side of your nature. Do not lose your grasp ; do not be overcome by despair ; do not think that you are not ascending the mount of spiritual attainment. The lagging foot is yet to be the foremost one. It may be the very one which is first to press itself upon the very summit of spiritual attainment.

The growth, the progress, the fruition of the human soul — oh, what a marvelous unfolding it is to see ! And in that unfolding let us trust, for it is God who calls the soul into being, who is shaping its destinies, who is ever calling, “ Friend, come up higher.” It is still God, the suffering, crucified God, who is calling, “ I am come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly.” “ Be of good cheer, because I live, ye shall live also.”

Oh, you must be of good cheer, for Christ is in you, ever in you, always in you, the hope of glory, your hope now and forever.

VI.

THE DIVINE SURPRISES.

So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. — ST. MARK iv. 26.

8 March, 1891.

VI.

THE DIVINE SURPRISES.

IN the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark, at the 26th verse, is that familiar parable where our Lord says, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." And all the time that this parable has been ringing in our ears, down through many centuries, we have been slow to understand that the kingdom of God is within us, and that the spiritual development of the soul is after its own laws, is always an unfolding, and is always looking on to the best that is yet to be. It is hard for us to accept this, and the parable receives a deaf ear, for we have fancied that our soul

might grow in our way, and we have fancied sometimes, in moments of despair, that the best has already been, and that the future is without hope, and when those great processes of spiritual growth occur, the soul, stunned, is scarcely prepared to receive them.

The soul in its spiritual growth and development has laws of its own, for the kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground and should sleep, or with anxious watchfulness should rise day and night, and give it every care, and scratch away the earth, to watch, impatient, the beginning of the growth ; but the seed groweth on, and he knoweth not how. With all his skill and anxiety he cannot tell how, but the seed grows, because the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, and there is first the blade, but the blade does not know what is coming after.

The little green growth, as it forces its way through the soil, is not prepared for the great surprises of its own development ; it is not prepared for the beautiful verdure of the green field caused by its own shooting up, nor even then for a still further development ; for now comes the ear with

its promises of even further development; with its promises of great usefulness, of some time furnishing food for the eater. And even then greater surprises are still in store, for the ear can scarcely guess,—this little ear of wheat not yet developed, just heavy enough to bend the stem on which it is growing,—it is scarcely prepared for the still further surprises of the full wheat, or corn, in the ear, and men and women, following this same thought, begin to realize that there is within them something of divine, Godlike possibility.

It is a strange experience when this realization first comes. It does not come often until there has been something of pain and anguish, corresponding, possibly, to the pain and anguish which the seed may experience. When first put into the repellent earth, and before the warm germinating influences of the soil have been felt, there comes the process of disintegration, of decay, and the seed suffers, as it were, while being torn limb from limb; but all this suffering, all this disintegration, makes the little seed grow and shoot up away from this misery and suffering. So when the disintegrating process comes to

us, there comes the realization of new life. Long before the sunlight, even, is seen, the life comes, while buried beneath the earth, as the little shoot pushes its way to the surface. Before we come to any realization of the strength of that great potency which is now at work within us, there is a growth, and it is a true growth. No true growth can be godless, because all growth begins from the root, and this is the true spiritual beginning, the true spiritual growth and development.

Now come the surprises, and men begin to realize that there is a reality to their own peculiarity, and discover that there are certain lines along which this reality is going, certain lines of development, certain processes of individuation ; just as, if we were to look at this little germ long before it pushes its way above the surface, we should see that it was unlike any germ that ever before has striven to come to the sunlight.

In all the vast domain of life there is no repetition ; every speck, every atom, every molecule, every minute particle of life, has its own special property and peculiarity. It is as if a child should take the mud that

it plays with to build a little house, and cut off here and there little bricks and stones, and every one of them were separate from the other, not one like another; so there is a process of individuation, separation, and with it development and growth.

I speak this in order that the soul, when it comes to the realization of its life, may not look for the same life in another soul. It does not look to other souls to see what are the surprises in store for it. Because one man has had one experience, because another soul has manifested itself in this way, it does not follow that this soul shall have the same experience and pass through the same processes. There should be no mistake. No soul should think of imitating another soul.

And now that every soul may look for still further surprises, what a surprise it is to some souls to find that they have distinction; that they have peculiar powers; that they may by their influence do something for other souls. It is one of the divine surprises. The surprise is when the little green growth comes above the earth's surface and finds that it is making the whole earth beautiful with its rich ver-

dure. Its beauty is not the beauty of the forest, of the hothouse growth, of the sky brilliant with sunset gorgeousness, but it has its own peculiar beauty. So the soul that finds that it has distinction is now ready to realize that it must be true to this surprise, to its own individuality, its own distinction, and will have nothing now of imitation, of striving to be like other souls. It will say to itself, "Be true to thine own self. Now let me seek for the distinction for which God has created me."

You this morning are looking to know what shall be your life, as he who should rise in the night ; yet the seed grows, he knows not how. It is not wise for us to ask what shall be our lives. "Sufficient unto the *instant* is the evil thereof." Our lives are hid with Christ in God, as the seed was hid in the mother earth, as the development was still hid in the tender arms of the sunlight and watered by the gentle dews from heaven. It is not best for us to ask what our lives shall be, but to be true to the present life and await with gentle expectancy still further surprises and developments.

Life is truest when it is most uncon-

scious. Do not be eager to know what your life is. Love loses its genuine ring when it knows that it is love. Virtue seems to be masquerading when it parades itself as virtue. Patriotism, when it sings its own praises, is not worthy of the name of patriotism. Whenever the soul realizes that it is alive, that moment there is a diminishing of the life. To illustrate: There have been supreme moments in your life when to others you seemed to live and to fairly glow with life as never before. In that unconscious manifestation of your soul you were more truly alive than ever before, as St. Paul caught up to the seventh heaven, or as the soul of the mother, bending over the cot on which the child lies wasting with sure and dreadful disease, manifests most truly the love that is within her, yet unconsciously. So the originality, the individuation, the distinction, the separateness passes on, and as the little shoot becomes the blade, as the tender growth develops into the larger leaf, there comes the realization of the continuity of life. It is the same current of life passing through the grown ear that there was in the first sprouting, that there was in the seed beneath the earth,

and this continuity of life breathes itself through all the forms of existence so that when men have become living souls it has been called inspiration. It is indeed inspiration, this great force of the universe breathing itself through nature. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and it should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how."

This inspiration, this breathing through human souls, may not be limited by either time, place, or character of the individual. As God breathed through the prophets, and into him, the last of the prophets, that is, into his own true Son until in him was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, God breathed into you that you may become more and more living souls by this inspiration illuminating your hearts and mind, till you see things hitherto hid, till you feel things before unknown, till you are imbued with strength hitherto not suspected, and this divine surprise of inspiration in the individual is an indication also of the further surprises in store.

If you, as an individual soul, are not bigger, fuller of divine power and inspiration, than you were five or ten years ago,

it is because this process of growth has been hindered or thwarted by your own rebellious interference—as if the farmer who has sown the seed should untimely scratch away the earth and hinder the germ's expansion, or later on, heedless of law, should walk rough-shod, as men sometimes do, over this early verdure and thwart its development. And if, I say, you are not fuller of divine love, more inspired by God, nearer to bearing fruit, it is because you have interfered with the seed of the soul as it was struggling on and up towards its development and fruitage.

So with mankind at large. If 1890 is not better than 1790, and if each decade is not better than the preceding one, it is because we have interfered as a race with those processes of growth and development which God ever has in store for us.

As this is true, so we listen expectantly to what perchance we call new laws; not new, although it is a new law to the trembling stalk as it finds itself developing into the wheat, but the law was always there. It came as an inspiration. So with great expectancy we listen for new laws, and mea-

sure the truthfulness of those laws only by their fruits. If they minister to the life, cure the diseases of the soul, make the life larger, greater, and truer, then are they accepted as an inspiration of God.

Fixedness in creed, in belief, in anything that is spiritual, is fatal. Look at the civilization of Egypt and see how crystallization binds it hand and foot. We must live in God, for God, and with God, and expect the surprises of development and growth.

How surprised John the Baptist must have been at the breaking up of his spiritual nature! How the great life-blood coursing though his veins must have astonished him, as with power he preached the coming of the great Messiah! How St. Paul must have been staggered,—Paul, the tent-maker, with his scholarly logic,—how it must have astonished him to find himself endowed with a power to turn the world upside down! and yet this upheaval of his spiritual life that burst the graveclothes of his theism was the divine surprise according to the great divine principle of inspiration.

We speak of the onward progress of the

Christian Church. It has not accomplished the one thousandth part of the realization in store for it. Why ! imagine ten men endued with a Holy Ghost ; twenty or a hundred men expecting this kingdom of God, prepared for its distinction, prepared for its inspirations, for its realization, then try to imagine the leavening influence in any community. If each one who has realized it would touch with this inspired power of God the soul that is next to him so that the whole mass might be ablaze with the divine fervor, souls knit to souls in a kindling inspiration that should burn out the sin of the race, and leave mankind refined of its dross,—shining metal, pure gold,—then I say the best is yet to be, must be.

Thus for you in all your sorrows, your sins, your disappointments, despairs, afflictions, the best is yet to be. Expect these surprises, welcome these experiences, be glad of these processes ; for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself. God is in his heaven. God is working with you ; we are fellow-workers with God. I see souls grasping with feebleness the truth, and I bid them to look on, and look up, and realize

that we have but guessed what we may yet be. At present be true to your growth, to these laws, to this divine germ, and then await the surprises. Life shall come as a bright beam from heaven penetrating the dark recesses of the hidden chamber of your soul, and shall quicken into growth the divine seed. You shall grow, though you know not how. Without impatient expectancy disturbing the influences of the soul, its development, its growth, there is now a gentleness hitherto unknown, a forgiveness you did not suppose possible, and still you live unconscious of this virtue that has come within you, a blessing to those with whom you come in contact, and still you live on, expecting more and more of the divine surprises.

Men, women, look up, look on, "for the kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and the seed should spring up. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

Your life is hid, safely hid with God. Let it grow. Let it spread, and as the great tree, its leaves shall be for the healing of the nations.

VII.

SUFFERING.

For it became him to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.—HEB. ii. 10.

31 May, 1891.

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VII.

SUFFERING.

LET me say this again, not quite in the same words. It was the expression of the will of God in leading many of his children unto their destiny, that is, unto blessedness, unto glory, to make Jesus, the Captain of their salvation, perfect, that is, fully developed as to his soul, his spiritual life, through sufferings.

Behold, then, the outpouring, the manifestation, of the eternal will of God. We behold it, we note it, and the record we thus make of this observed operation of the will of God we call law. So that it seems to be the law of God, that is, the will of God in operation, that, in the full and complete development of man as a spiritual being, suffering shall be a process through which the soul acquires character. We do not venture to say that this stands in the relation of cause and effect. I do not presume to say that suffering causes char-

acter. I only note that, as the soul passes through suffering, character follows when other spiritual laws are obeyed.

Behold the "Man of Sorrows," acquainted with grief. On the grassy slopes of Galilee there walks a man acquainted with poverty. "He had not where to lay his head." A few friends attach themselves to him. By reason of his life, the purity of his soul, he is as a magnet to draw spiritual beings into his presence; but even these forsake him, and he is left alone, without companionship, without friends. Later on comes the pain of misrepresentation. He is not a gluttonous man, nor a wine-bibber, nor is he one who would cringe or fawn in the presence of the rich; but he is so represented. It is said of him that he was a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. It was as false to say this of him as to say of some honest spirits to-day that they are tricky, dishonest, and false to their trust, or of some gentle spirits that they have been cruel and base. Men will be misrepresented, and he suffers this. He chooses some intimate friends, enfolds them to his heart in the intimacy of love and profound friendship, but one of

them becomes a traitor, and for only thirty pieces of silver, till his name has rung through the centuries as the synonym of infamy, and one can say no worse of another than that he is a Judas. Yet this same gentle soul drinks of that bitterness, that dreg of the cup of human sorrow, the feeling that he has been the cause of the sin of another. Can you fancy any greater suffering than this, to believe that you have caused the spiritual loss of another? Sometimes when I picture to myself the sufferings of this Jesus, it seems to me that there is no dreg in the cup so bitter, so hard to drink, as the feeling, the belief, that one has been the cause of the spiritual loss of another. Soon the cross awaits its victim. The bed-ridden sufferer knows something of this physical agony, knows how hard it is to lie for years, perhaps, upon a bed of pain. Now, see the uplifting cross; the nerves are tortured, the burning thirst consumes the life, the racking pain distorts the features. Yet this is not all. Greater suffering than this physical pain is endured. The heavens are darkened, as in many souls since the veil of despair has dropped; even the face of

God seems to be shut out. "My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" The very depth of human woe is reached. Now is the very birth-throe of the soul, for in the very next instant it comes into the full realization of itself. "Thy will, not mine, be done;" like a mighty flood there rushes into his soul the will of God, and he is at one with his Father.

Thus briefly have I tried to bring before your minds the agony, both physical and mental, of this Jesus, the Captain of our salvation.

Now, what he experienced must all the more truly be experienced by every soul reaching the sublime heights of his greatness. If he, through the greatest suffering, is made perfect, how shall we expect to enter into the full development and realization of our souls, apart from this law of suffering? Again I do not venture to say that this is cause and effect, but that there seems to be a certain law operative in the spiritual process along which life is developed by suffering.

Notice that the end of the human soul is not pleasure. You were not made that you might participate in pleasure,—this

is not the highest expression of your life ; you were made for something higher than that, for blessedness, for the full development of character, to enter into the full realization, completion, and fulfillment of the powers of the ideal soul.

Character, then, is the one aim of man, that is, life. "I am come that ye may have life, and have it more abundantly." You were not made for pleasure, nor that you might escape from pain, but for life, for character, for blessedness. "Blessed are they that mourn." That is, the happiness of the fulfilled and developed soul is in store for those who mourn, that blessedness for which we were created, destined. If we shall keep clearly in mind the end and destiny for which the human soul is called into being, then I think we shall be capable of looking at this question of pain in a very different light. Hold firmly, then, before your minds what you were made for, not for pleasure, but for the complete development of your soul, — "in leading many of his children into glory," not merely bringing, but leading, — and that this development can come by suffering, as the Captain of our salvation was fully developed through suffering.

With God there are no problems. We have no problems in the spiritual process, as we should have none in the physical. Rather, we simply stand with eager hearts and waiting eyes, watching the unfolding of the will of God. The true electrician finds no problem in electricity. He may be bewildered by the mystery by which he is surrounded; he may not understand how the message is transmitted along the wires, or what he calls the underground current; he has nothing now to do with the solution of mystery, but simply to watch the development and manifestation of a physical process, and in proportion as he is true to his science, to this unfolding and development, so he becomes the true scientist and electrician.

What would you think of the scientist trying to square a theory of three hundred years ago with a theory of six hundred years ago, and then striving for a formula to make them fit? The true scientist must have to do with the forces of nature to-day, noting their fulfillment and manifestation; not wasting his time endeavoring to discover how his chariot is made, but simply "hitching his wagon to the stars."

He has nothing to do with problems as such. So it is in the spiritual process. We must not turn our eyes backward to theological theories of some hundred or a thousand years ago, but simply note the outpouring of the spiritual life, of the will of God, and in that noting we shall make our spirits go the way of the will of God, and in making our souls thus a part of the will of God we shall enter into that full and complete development of the soul of which it is capable.

Here lies a sufferer, bed-ridden for years, nerve-tortured, in racking pain, and he goes back in his despair to the theories of a thousand years ago and sees in this blessed universe two Gods, a God of evil and a God of love, contending one with another. The God of evil says : "I am punishing you for some transgression you committed in the past ;" and the soul of this poor tortured sufferer raises its eye to this God and curses the day it was born, and would die ; God entirely shut out from his vision, he rests only in the absolute despair of suffering. Now, let us say to that bed-ridden sufferer, "God is a God of love." As he is the God of love, so is he also

the God of pity. As the mother's heart is torn in witnessing the sufferings of her child, suffering many times more keenly in her heart than the child can possibly suffer in its body, so God, who weeps when we weep, feels with us, as did Jesus in the story of the beloved Lazarus, suffers with us, pities us, cares for us to the end.

There are certain laws in the physical process which God does not promise to stay. The child puts its finger in the fire. God is sorry for the pain of the burned hand, but he does not promise to stay the operation of this law. If we violate a law of the physical process, we must take the suffering. We thus see how knowledge comes only by experience, which is another way of saying that knowledge comes only by suffering. If we are to learn the laws of the physical process we must accept the suffering. Many a man must be stricken down by lightning before the laws of electricity are discovered and the science made useful to man.

It is along the line of broken laws that experience through pain and suffering brings knowledge. If knowledge is power, suffering is still greater power. The suf-

fering that men of science have experienced is the momentum given to the force and power which have enlarged the area of ascertained knowledge. It is the martyr flame that has become the quickening power of the spiritual growth and development of the soul. Everywhere suffering has given power, mightier than that of knowledge. Who was it that was able to write some of the Psalms? David, the sinner, adulterer, murderer. Yet when the iron of remorse entered his soul, his sufferings became intense, and by that suffering, experience, and knowledge he comes to have his lips touched as with a burning and living coal snatched from the fire of the altar of God's love. So has it been with Paul,—misdirected power. For what is sin, sometimes, but the failure to hit the mark? The bow is bent, the arrow is sped, but the mark is missed and suffering follows. Saul bends the bow of his enthusiasm, speeds the arrow of his persecuting venom, desiring to do God service, but misses the mark, and then the sufferings come. He is smitten to the earth with momentary blindness; he is not acknowledged by God's people. Even the Chris-

tians at Jerusalem will not recognize him ; but through all this knowledge, pain, and suffering he comes to be the loving Paul.

If we may note the result of broken laws in pain, and that through pain knowledge comes, and even a greater power than knowledge, is it not reasonable, at least, to say that suffering seems to have a necessary place in the development of the human soul ? The body suffers, but it is of comparatively little consequence what happens to the body ; it is ephemeral, it lasts but a day. It is better than the garment it wears, but it is only the creature of an hour. The racking pain of the body, we may say, in many instances, is the result of violated physical laws, but the spiritual life is of the first consequence, and, as a matter of fact, it does grow along the lines and through the process of suffering.

It seems to me a perfectly fair question to ask, Was there ever any fully developed soul who did not suffer intensely, and in that suffering develop the forces and talents within it, rising almost to the level of genius ? Have you never felt in the presence of some mighty spirit, born

with unusual powers, capable of accomplishing mighty things, rising in the sublimity of his forces to the transcendent heights of genius, yet never having been burned to the fibres of his soul by the consuming fire of pain and agony,— have you not felt in the presence of such a life that, when the supreme moment of Christ-like agony shall have come to him, he will burst the bonds binding him by reason of his limitations and through the fires of his suffering spring into hitherto unknown powers and capabilities? Shall we dare to say that Lincoln could have been a Lincoln without his sufferings? Dante a Dante without his? Luther, Melancthon, Ridley, Cranmer, St. Augustine? Oh, how the pain of sin entered St. Augustine's soul; how the biting chisel of violated law cut the fair beauty of holiness, engraved his character! and through his Confessions we are enabled to see the process through which the angel of his spirit was let out. Dare we say that St. Augustine would have been what he was without all his sufferings?

May we not say, then, that it is a law,— understanding all the time that law is only

the record we make of our observations of the manifestations and unfoldings of the will of God ; but with this understanding, may we not say that it is a law of the soul that character shall come along the line and through the process of suffering ? May we not also say that suffering develops all the latent forces, and that if the greatest and the best came out in Jesus through suffering, so the greatest and best can come out in us along the same lines ? We shall not then lift up our faces to God and say, "Curse the day I was born," but, "Thou art my God, and I will trust thee ; thou art my God, and I will love thee."

Thus in the spiritual process the higher life is growing, developing, asserting itself, fulfilling its being, claiming in realization its destiny, and thus, through suffering, nothing can stay it, obstruct it, thwart it, defeat it. As soon grasp the chariot wheels of the sun, as stop the soul's ultimate development.

"Is it true, O Christ in heaven,
That the highest suffer most?
That the strongest wander farthest,
And most hopelessly are lost?
That the mark of rank in nature
Is capacity for pain?

And the anguish of the singer
Makes the sweetness of the strain?"

Of course there is much suffering that we have it in our power to prevent. The animal life about us suffers; shame to us that it is so. What a commentary on human savagery it is that only by the power of an organized society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, backed by the constabulary force of the government, we may have our hand stayed from violence and cruelty to the dumb brutes that serve us so patiently! It is only a step higher, "man's inhumanity to man," when we witness the sorrow and suffering by which we are surrounded without lifting a finger to touch but the hem of sorrow, that virtue may go out from us to help and bless. But shall we blame God for that? rather the demon of hate, cruelty, and selfishness that inspires our own hearts.

But men may rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things, and you and I should use the experiences that come to us as ladders, by which we may ascend with blessing and praise into that realm of existence where we belong in kinship with God.

I wonder if I have said enough to have you take away with you this morning one or two simple truths. First, that you are made for glory, character, to become a fully developed soul. Nothing short of this can ever satisfy the demands of your being. There are certain spiritual laws that must be obeyed, and they are as exacting in their demands as physical laws. Here is a farmer with his mowing-machine. He understands that every cog must answer cog, every wheel fit into wheel, otherwise there will be grinding, waste, loss, destruction. It is so with the soul. There are certain forces that must fit,—righteousness with love, patience with humility, pardon and forgiveness with courage and heroism, sanctification with holiness,—and those are vital forces of the soul and must answer, and fit in one with another. You are made for glory, and God is helping you on to glory, not to salvation only, except in so far as salvation is being saved from blunder and from mistake. He is leading you to character, to the welfare of the soul, and that is his aim for your life, that it may be well with all the forces of your spiritual nature.

Then I want you to see that he, who alone of all men has reached that glory,—the Man of Sorrows, treading the way of the cross, forsaken of friends, feeling that he was the cause of the spiritual loss of another, misrepresented, suffering every physical pain and the still greater mental agony of a soul shut out from the presence of God,—that he only entered into that fullest realization of the soul when he could cry, “Thy will, not mine, be done.” So that the soul at this moment is flooded, as it were, with the vision of the will of God, till the two wills become one; and in that oneness is the power of victory, the victory by which the soul enters into harmony with all the spiritual forces of the universe and is at one with God. I want you to see that as the Captain of your salvation leads that way, so you must go, and in going that way the latent forces of your soul may be developed; that physical pain may be as nothing; and that mental anguish is only the consuming fire that shall inspire your soul to greater effort and draw out the spiritual forces that are within you.

Oh, take new ideas of your possibilities, your destinies; see in this great suffering

of yours that you are bound more closely with others who suffer, that there is sympathy that goes out to them, that you have, because of your suffering, a power and force for the uplifting of your fellows only excelled by him who endured the cross and despised the shame that he might lead us, children of his Father, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone,—lead his own brethren from glory unto glory, into the full realization and development of their souls, through the pain, the suffering, the agony by which man creeps first to the foot of his cross, then to its summit, and there beholds the lines of the cross melting away and taking on the shape of the throne of the soul, whereon sits forever the suffering God. At his right hand he reigns for ever and ever, the suffering Christ, whose love is continually brought to us by that same suffering Spirit, whose groanings and beechings never cease, as he seeks with tender pity to draw us to our hearts' true home in the bosom of the infinite God.

VIII.

JOB.

The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. —
JOB xlii. 10.

Newport, 19 July, 1891.

VIII.

JOB.

THIS is a wonderful drama, this drama of Job, — archaic in form, ancient in character; probably one of the most ancient pieces of literature. It is inspired, because it tells the truth. It seems quite striking that so clear a grasp of truth should have come down to us from so early a date.

In Cairo to-day you see the mummy of Rameses II., and you feel as if the 3300 years since his death had been bridged over, and that you were gazing upon his face and taken back to the time when this drama is set. The scene is laid perhaps one hundred years before the time of Rameses II. We know to what an extent civilization had risen in Egypt, how great were the attainments of the Egyptians in poetry, in literature, and in the sciences. We are therefore ready to appreciate the scope of this drama ; and also are ready to

see that religion had advanced only so far as a patriarchal type, domestic in form and spirit, with little ceremonial, and no separate priesthood.

The Book of Job is a poem of the purest, most exalted type. There are graphic touches of human life in it. Let us see how it begins.

Here is a rich Arabian of high rank, called Job, — a chieftain, a warrior, a judge, and of immense wealth ; one of the greatest men in the East. His wealth is enumerated in the poem. It speaks of his seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, one thousand oxen, and so on. His home is near the great cities of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, which he frequently visits. He is upon the main caravan route between the East and Egypt, and is in constant communication with the advanced Egyptian civilization. He has all that great prosperity can give him, and, as a happy and unusual combination, with this great wealth he has absolute integrity.

I say integrity, because integrity is only another name for spirituality. The man who preserves his integrity preserves his spirituality. The man who manifests his

life most truly is the most pious man. He may not know it himself. Many men are not aware of the greatness of their own souls, quite unaware, frequently, of the depth of the spirituality which is manifesting itself through them constantly. We see this in the lives of great spirits. Such was St. Paul, such our Lord.

Here in Job is this happy combination of wealth, spiritual attainment, and power, the respect of his fellows, friends, and neighbors, and the happiest domestic life. This great man, with all that these favorable external surroundings can give him, is also a man of great spirituality, of great integrity.

That God may lead man from a great height of spiritual attainment to one still greater and far more sublime, he may lead him first down through deep, dark valleys, before he has the power to scale the greater heights to which God destines him. It is by this increase of his spiritual life, by this going down into these valleys of great soul-agony, that man is able to climb the dizzy heights, those sublime summits, to which God strives to lead him. Great spirits who have changed the current of

human life, and have left their impress upon their fellows, have come down from heights into the dark, deep valleys of great, heart-breaking grief. Christ himself passed down into the deep sorrows of Gethsemane's garden before he reached that sublimest height on Calvary's cross-crowned top. It is by such experiences that the human soul stands side by side with God, and the human will becomes at one with the divine. It is God's way constantly with man, that through those dark valleys of sorrow and great trial he may lead him to the greater heights. Sometimes these experiences come to man in middle life. It was so with Moses. He was more than forty years old before he began to be led into the dark valley, and he was eighty before he began to assert the powers that were within him.

It is in middle life that these experiences come to Job. God has great jewels, which he is holding in his hand ready to give to him. See in this a parable of the human experience of life. In his hand God is holding forth the great jewels of his own spiritual life, ready to impart them to man. But man can receive them only in

God's way. When God finds man strong enough to receive more of the divine, then he lets him go down into the valley of the shadow. So Job at seventy has swept from him,—not at a single blow, months probably elapse between each of the catastrophes,—he has taken from him his wealth, his position, his home, his domestic happiness. Everything that man would hold dear is taken away. First comes the loss of his wealth, and that would stagger most men. Then his entire family is lost. Then comes a revolting disease, "elephantiasis."

Months elapse before Job's friends in the far East get tidings of the calamities that have come to him, and they make reasonable haste to come to see him, and according to Eastern custom they scatter the dust over their heads and throw it toward heaven; they tear their robes, expensive garments of silk, as expressions of their sympathy, and coming into Job's presence, they sit staring and gaping upon him for seven days in awful, painful silence.

Seven days and nights without uttering a word, and finally Job himself breaks the silence.

"Remember," they say, "we have had a council in heaven between the Lord, the angels, and Satan." There is no irreverence here; and Satan receives his commission to subject Job to the most painful privations. There is an archaic simplicity in this great drama when Satan says to the Lord: "Doth this prosperous Job fear thee for naught?" That is to say: "See how well his piety serves him. It brings him wealth, prosperity." The problem is propounded: "Can there be righteousness apart from selfishness?"

Men sometimes think that goodness for its own sake has no foundation in human experience ; that "goodness is merely the best policy ;" but that is the Satanic view. In this drama we are shown that there is such a thing as goodness for its own sake ; and the more the human race realizes that there is such a thing in human consciousness and experience as goodness for its own sake, righteousness for its own value, piety for its own worth, the truer it comes to the normal life.

The three pious romancers, not intentionally misrepresenting the truth, but distorting God's ways to make them square

with their own peculiar views,—Eliphaz, with his profound dignity; Bildad, with his wise saws, and Zophar, bigoted, violent, coarse, striving to measure all souls by the standard of a balance-sheet,—they know that suffering means some special sin.

“Can it be that there is so much calamity without sin?” We have sometimes, either looking at ourselves or at others, thought that, because this man or woman is experiencing great calamity, there must be some secret sin somewhere, some great violation of God’s law. But Christ taught quite otherwise. “Who hath sinned, this man that is born blind, or his parents?” Hear the answer: “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

Job’s friends are confident that there must be something wrong as to his faith; he must have denied the fundamental principles of religion.

We are so ready to say, when a man or woman has suffered, that there is something wrong with his religion. These men were only too eager to see the beam in Job’s eye, to say with their vulgar, gross denunciation, “What you need is some such

faith as we have ; " and Job, in that delicious sarcasm, replied : " Surely ye are the people, and wisdom must perish with you ! "

Calamity is not caused by sin. It is the process through which the soul is passing, and sorrows are used as God's agencies, as the processes through which the soul may pass, the vehicles to convey the riches of God's life and love.

Then follows the great controversy, and it wages with great spirit and vigor. Job insists upon his own integrity. Although perplexed by events to which he can find no clue, he insists upon his own substantial innocence. He knows he may have transgressed spiritual laws, but as to conscious sin, willful sin, deliberate hostility to God, he is innocent, and he insists upon his integrity. He respects the righteousness that is within him.

One of the first steps toward spiritual life is to respect the righteousness that is within you, because that righteousness is a part of God. How do you know God, save by the righteousness he has implanted within you ? You say : " I will conduct my business honestly, but I know nothing

about religious matters." Ah, but you do. By this very honesty that is within you, you are beginning to recognize God and to see who he is. How do we take hold of eternal life, save by knowing God through righteousness, that is, through Christ? He is the righteous one, the Sun of Righteousness.

All through this drama Job maintains his own integrity. Men may scoff, laugh, and jeer at him, but it will not make him swerve from his position as to his conscious innocence. So the drama moves on; the controversy rages, yet Job all the while is getting more and more of God. Destruction of property has taken place; disease has done its worst; domestic joys have departed, wife and children gone; everything that man would ordinarily value has been taken away, but there stands Job, strong in the life of God, which no man can take from him; nay, stronger in that which was of value, than at any previous time in the history of his soul-development.

There never was a time when he was so great, so strong, so real, as when he lies stricken to the earth, overcome by his great sorrows and afflictions, forsaken, rejected,

alone. It is now that God is pouring out himself into the soul of Job. It is the nature of God to suffer, to pity, to love; and to know God is to know him through suffering, through pity, and by love.

In the closing scenes of the drama the question is raised as to the prosperity of the wicked. In the light of Christ's life we have reached a solution of this. But it startles us to find it reached thirty-five hundred years ago. It comes up again in the Psalms: "I have seen the wicked in great prosperity." Men are asking the same question now: "How is it that the wicked prosper?" The answer should be clear enough, and it is in this great dramatic poem. Clear enough! There is no such thing as the prosperity of the wicked.

The prosperity of a man's soul cannot be measured by terms of sheep, of camels, of oxen, of wealth, fame, reputation. You cannot measure a man's prosperity in terms of being a chieftain, a warrior, a statesman, simply because man is made along other lines. He is made for other things. The happiness and prosperity of a child may be measured, when he is very young, by the

number of pretty pebbles picked from the seashore and crammed into his little pockets, but when you begin to realize that the child is made for something more than that, then his prosperity ceases to be measured by such terms. If we are to be measured by wealth, by health, by fame, then, indeed, Job's prosperity was taken from him when all these things were stripped away ; but because a man's prosperity consists of that which is of the greatest value to him, of that which differentiates him from every other being in creation, his "manness," his integrity, then do you not see that to speak of the prosperity of the wicked is a contradiction in terms ? The wicked man is bristling with negative signs. That which is of value to a man is positive ; life, righteousness, honesty, holiness, are positive. Wickedness cannot be a positive thing, and to speak of the prosperity of the wicked is, I am sure, a contradiction in terms. I say this for your encouragement and warning. If prosperity means wealth, riches, power, success, we are placing ourselves upon the level of the little child. That which is true prosperity is that which is of the greatest value

to man, which differentiates him from other beings, namely, his spirituality, his integrity, his manliness; and the whole drama of Job serves to show this clearly, that a man's goodness can be retained even in a hell of surroundings.

Now a great deal of false theology has been derived from this drama. If you will run through it, you will see dozens of phrases which are thus in common use, but they came from those three men who, at the close of the drama, were condemned by the Lord: "My wrath is kindled against thee and thy two friends."

Then comes the close of the drama, and it is a beautiful ending: "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, and also the Lord gave him twice as much as he had before." It sounds like a child's tale now to hear about the fourteen thousand sheep, the six thousand camels, the two thousand oxen, and the one thousand she asses,—how everything is doubled! His children, who had been taken away by death, have their places taken by ten more children, seven sons, three daughters ("and no women found so fair"); and how the greatness of Job is magnified! But it is always

so. God takes away that he may give, that is all. Look back over your own lives, or the lives of others, and see how true this is of God's dealing with human souls. Pick out from your acquaintances some of those spirits before whose righteousness you have had the opportunity to bow down, and see how, in the processes through which this great soul-development has been attained, there has been the giving by God of those jewels which he holds in his tender, loving hands.

All God could give to Job through joy he had given him before his suffering, and now he sees him strong enough to take a greater measure of riches, and he leads him through the deep, dark valleys of sorrow and trial to the sublime heights of still greater achievement. It is fascinating and exhilarating to watch God's providences, to see how there is the constant revelation of himself, the giving at every possible opportunity of himself, the leading of the child through tangle and thicket and rough paths, always that he may impart something more.

When once you begin to realize what you are, begin to be at one with God, real-

ize that you were created to have your will in absolute oneness with the Father's will, that you are destined to have your own place in the spiritual process, that you are an heir with Christ, then do you not see that you are ready, gladly ready, eagerly watchful, to seize every revelation of God, every outpouring of God, whether in joy or sorrow, ready to see that he is giving you double of himself? "And the Lord also gave Job twice as much as he had before."

"Grow old along with me !
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half ; trust God : see all, nor be
afraid !'"

Oh, may you catch this impression, that God is striving to fill your hearts and lives and souls with himself ; that in this great drama you see how true it is to live through an onward, even movement, from lower to higher spiritual attainments. As spiritual beings you are made for the best, the highest and greatest, and the Lord shall turn your captivity if you will but realize that you are spirits, that you are made for the best and highest, and that toward the best

and highest he is leading you. May God hasten the day when, through sorrow, pain, or joy, you may receive a double portion of himself, and enter at last into oneness with him, oneness with Jesus, oneness with the Christ, — in all things like him, that we may live forever and not die.

IX.

ISAIAH.

Lo, this hath touched thy lips. — Is. vi. 7.

26 July, 1891.

IX.

ISAIAH.

BEHOLD, the fire of God hath done its perfect work, and there stands before us the greatest of the Hebrew prophets, Isaiah. What hath God wrought! A creature of clay touched with the fire of God, and behold, one of the grandest figures on the page of history.

History never repeats itself. Man comes upon the stage unlike any of his predecessors, and no man follows him who is his like. So human experience never repeats itself. No man has passed through just such stages of development as Isaiah did. Isaiah, therefore, stands unique. His experiences, as yours, are unlike those which come into the life of any other man.

We have had strange notions about such men as Moses and Isaiah. We have thought of them as men unlike ourselves, as demigods, not men having passions,

thoughts, experiences, temptations, like ourselves ; not surrounded by conditions similar to ours. In this respect human nature is always more or less alike. I remember in my boyhood days it was exceedingly difficult to believe that men who lived fifty, five hundred, a thousand, or three thousand years before were men such as live to-day. To me it was inconceivable that they were men having thoughts, feelings, temptations, like ours ; men as we understand men. But all that has gone.

Isaiah is a sagacious politician, a profound statesman ; a man bred in the city, always living in the capital ; of high social rank, having access and great influence at court, having such opportunities and power there that he can address, in very plain language, even the king. He is also a man of great literary skill and training. This is apparent from his writings. Of keen perception of truth, a man whose soul is so set afire by God that his mental perceptions are set aglow ; so that he can see where other men are blind, hear where other men are deaf, respond where other men are indifferent to the great fundamental principles of eternal truth.

Fancy with me eternal life as a circle, and Moses taking hold of his segment of the circle, Isaiah taking hold of his, and so with every great spirit, each one taking hold of his own particular segment of the circle of everlasting truth, and you will get some conception of the opportunity that rests upon every human soul to declare itself. Isaiah thus was himself.

Isaiah is married, and his wife is kindled with the same enthusiasm, so much so that she is called a prophetess. What scope God gave to the powers of women in the development of Israel ! His two sons also are aroused to the same feeling, and they are to grasp their own segment of the circle of eternal truth.

Nay, more than this. Isaiah draws about him a school of disciples, of followers, who also are fired with the same desire to grasp eternal truth. He founds a school of prophets. Hence he was not a man of insignificant position or influence. We must not think of him as a mere creature of circumstance, but as a great personage ; a soul filled with the fire of righteousness and with an intense determination to discharge every function of his great being,

so far as he understood them ; a man who had a vision of righteousness so set on fire with everlasting truth that his very soul was aglow with light from the holiness of God. He blazed God !

Note the political aspect of his day and generation. Judah is prosperous, silver and gold are in plenty, millionaires multiply, field is added to field, great estate to great estate, till the riches of the few are the cause of the suffering of the many, and the faces of the poor are ground, and yet their cry comes up to deaf ears. For there has been a failure to distinguish between righteousness as it affects the soul, and mere ceremonial righteousness, — that is to say, the one burden of Isaiah's message to his fellows as individuals and as constituting the state, speaking both as a preacher and as a statesman, — his one message is Holiness. But see how men had mistaken the conception of holiness, even as we also sometimes do. Holiness with them had been to a great extent ceremonial righteousness merely. As we say sometimes that when a man says his prayers, reads his Bible, becomes a church member, and conducts himself according

to the dictates of public opinion, all is well with him. Notice that in the Jewish mind there had been this idea of ceremonial righteousness ; that is to say, everything would go well if there were conformity to the requirements of the state. So it had come to pass as a current opinion that there might be holiness with gross immorality ; that immorality affected not at all the question of holiness. The immorali- ties of Canaanitish worship in their influence upon the Hebrews is a case in point.

In the New Testament there is a clearer conception of sin and of holiness, but in Isaiah's day there was an incomplete notion of holiness and a false notion as to sin. A wrong act would put you in the power of one who would make you rue it ; if you violated a certain political require-
ment or ceremonial enactment, that was a sin, because it placed you in the power of one who could make you suffer the punish-
ment. Just as now men sometimes think that the heinousness of their sin is mea-
sured by the probabilities of their being detected. Notice Isaiah's preaching of righteousness, of holiness, as the first of

spiritual realities ; that sin is that which injures the soul, a negative expression of the soul's life, and it matters not whether it be known or not. That is not the question. It matters not whether the soul be detected in a violation of spiritual holiness. Of course it is wrong to commit sin, because it hurts your brother. No man can live to himself, no man can die to himself, so no man can sin to himself. We never can separate ourselves in our influence from others. The thrill of that violation is felt in its vibration and touches some other life. It is the pebble dropped into the sea of human experience, whose waves touch to the farthest shore in its effect. That is always and entirely true, but the evil of sin is not so much in its hurtfulness to other lives, as in that it hurts man's own integrity. Sin is the jar given to the exquisite sensitiveness of personal holiness.

Isaiah's ideas had to expand somewhat, I think, in the beginning of that forty years of his ministry. He begins his prophetic career before 734 B. C., and it extends beyond 701 B. C., probably forty years at least, possibly even longer, from

his youthful enthusiasm on to the mature determination of his advanced life. With him there is a growth and an appreciation of the nature of spiritual holiness. At first he had felt that if Judah as a nation could have absolute integrity and righteousness, if it could have conformity to the enactments of the law, that thus Israel should be saved. It is not till later on that he seizes with a fuller grasp the truth that, even if Judah as a nation were stricken to the earth, her great wealth taken from her, prostrated and trodden under foot,—even amid all this woe, yet integrity, holiness, righteousness, might prevail. Jeremiah saw this more clearly one hundred years later; and in the times of our Lord, then indeed we see a clearer vision of what integrity, holiness, and righteousness are. But we in these days see, or should see, that as a fundamental spiritual reality, absolutely essential to the soul's growth, righteousness, apart from any consideration from without, is a requisite of the soul's life.

Sometimes we think we are to be saved from without. We say, "We are citizens of Judah, or Hebrews of the Hebrews, or members of the church, Christians, or

Americans, and, for example, as goes the State, so we also shall go ; as goes the Church, so we also shall go." Some even have felt that their family shall save them. "We have never done anything that has been detected, committed no overt transgression ;" all the time ignoring the necessity of spiritual soul-righteousness, ignoring the absolute necessity that spirituality shall be synonymous with holiness, and that righteousness shall mean the soul's integrity ; failing to recognize the fact that holiness (righteousness) is none other than being at one with God, and that salvation means nothing less than a man taking hold of his own portion of eternal truth — of the eternal God.

Then, as ever, there was a division of the world's life, where religion on the one hand was a worship of national prosperity, political alliances, as who should say : " If only we could have land enough, capital enough, and millionaires enough, a sufficiently advanced civilization, public libraries, electric railways, public schools and colleges, institutions of learning, art galleries, everything that means material prosperity, — if only we could have prosperity

enough, we should have the salvation of the whole race, the holiness of mankind. If only we could have wealth enough, if only we could have that highest condition of altruism, one living for another, it would land man upon a plane of such exalted being that it would be righteousness, salvation indeed. All hail to the salvation of the race!" That was what the Hebrews thought. If only they could have a sufficiently beautiful temple, land joined to land, field to field, estate to estate, riches enough, material prosperity enough, form satisfactory alliances with neighboring nations, why, then there would be success, salvation that would be righteousness, holiness to the nation ; the very bells on the horses should ring it out.

The other division is of those who worship holiness, the Holy One of Israel, spiritually, apart, and in spite of any material condition ; who strive to express their souls, even though they may be oppressed with the great temptations of riches ; who carry cheerfully, if need be, the great cross of fame, reputation, and success, even if they are compelled to stand upon the very apex of the pinnacle of worldly honor and

glory, where men have placed them, yet stand there in the strength which God supplies ; or who, though stricken to earth by affliction, sorrow, or pinching want, beaten down, tempest torn, yet live, as such souls may, as did Paul, and count it joy thus to be crucified with Christ, because they have the life of God within them ; because it is as true of them as of Isaiah, "one of the seraphim has come to him, with a live coal in his hand, taken from off the altar, and has placed it on his mouth and said, 'Lo, this hath touched thy lips.' "

Thus mankind ever has been divided into these two classes, the one whose religion is material prosperity, the other whose religion is spirituality, that is, the expression of the soul in the life of God, whence it springs, to whom it belongs, whither it is going.

I think you would be interested to have it brought to your mind that the prophecies of Isaiah are collections of his writings through the long years of his preaching. He had preached orally, and had made a careful arrangement of his prophecies, and committed them to writing. His disciples, or followers, had aided him in this work, and many of these prophecies as they are

bound up here in this book are, therefore, not in chronological order, because, perhaps, they did not take their present fixed form until two hundred and fifty years after Isaiah had committed them to writing. You can see, then, how this would account for some disarrangement as to dates. Go back now two hundred and fifty years and edit documents written then, and you would see how difficult it would be to give them just the order they might naturally assume. You will also be interested to note that many of these writings were placarded in public places where men could read them. Reading and writing by this time had become a common accomplishment; it was the custom to place these prophecies, these sermons, exhortations, warnings, in public places, that people might read them, and that thus the influence of Isaiah might be extended, so that thousands beyond his immediate hearers might know of the deep things that were stirring his heart. You have also seen how Isaiah drew about him disciples; they also would extend his words by committing them to writing.

Beside being a statesman, Isaiah was a

national reformer, and he gives himself in entire consecration to the cause of bringing spirituality into the Hebrew national life. He is also the one who delineates for the first time a concrete example of spirituality. He preaches it with life-giving power. Lineament upon lineament, as an engraver with his tools traces line upon line, so at length there stands out in concrete form the great beauty of holiness, the strength, the suffering, the gentleness, the purity, the simplicity of that divine figure which, having seen once, and once only, we hold as dear as life. This divine figure expresses itself forever upon the annals of human history. Thus it is Isaiah who first gives us the Christ, the personal Messiah, the embodiment in concrete form of spirituality, and who establishes in this Messiah the fellowship of righteousness.

It is in Isaiah's mind that there is the birth of that first conception of a church in its richer and larger significance, where there is first recognized the advantage and the necessity of fellowship, of drawing together spiritualities, personalities, human souls, that they may help one another, build themselves into the temple not made with

hands, and thus perpetuate the life of God among men ; or, in other words, we find that larger, completer view of the oneness and the brotherhood of the human race. Up to this time there was the feeling, like lurking poison, that their brethren were foreigners, barbarians. It is a poison which pervades our present day civilization to a great extent, — regarding men of yellow skin or of dark skin not as brothers, but as aliens, not of the one family of God. It is that same disease which makes men refuse to recognize the brotherhood of mankind. Isaiah beholds the true vision of the oneness of the brotherhood of mankind, and in that oneness alone is the human race to accomplish all the grandeur for which it is called into being. Often you and I feel that this oneness is something to be admired, at least in theory, yet we fail to come into full apprehension of the necessity of the existence of this oneness, the necessity of this brotherhood of the human race. We do not seem to understand even to-day that when the faces of the poor are being ground, then the kingdom of God is being thwarted. The wheels of the chariot of progress "drove heavily "

under such conditions ; yet we are holding back the great chariot of the onward movement of the divine purpose when we suffer one member of the human race to be outraged, his rights withheld, or himself made a slave. Whenever we are oppressing the poor, adding field to field, estate to estate, piling up fortunes at the cost of the suffering of any brother, we are ignoring that fundamental principle of the spirituality, the brotherhood, of the human race, and rolling back by centuries with a single movement of the arm the onward movement of the coming of the great civilization, the divine citizenship, the kingdom of God on earth.

Isaiah emphasizes personal holiness, portrays the features, the divine holiness of the coming Messiah, binds all kindred spiritual souls into the oneness of an organic fellowship, which shall continue beyond the gates of death, beyond any of those disintegrating forces which have pulled down thrones and shaken the foundations of the nations of the earth. This conception of the oneness of fellowship is the outcome of the inspiration of that divine vision where one of the seraphim,

with a live coal snatched from off the altar,
touched Isaiah's lips.

He has unconquerable faith in God. With Isaiah man's extremity is God's opportunity. His faith is in the living God as a consuming fire; he believes in the efficacy of the divine love which as a living coal burns the soul, purifying, illuminating, making clear the faculties and all the powers of man's spiritual life. Though the people of God be led into captivity, though riches be exchanged for great poverty and distress, yet through all this pruning there is the hand of a loving life, which is cutting back the branches, even the vine itself, that it may bear fruit and bear it more abundantly.

This is Isaiah's vital faith which makes it possible to see in the face of all adverse conditions that even though the life be cut back, yet it is done by the loving hand of God, and that the branch is being pruned, not mercilessly, not without pity, not arbitrarily, but because the great heart of God sees in the vine and in the branch greater possibilities. "I am the vine, ye are the branches," and "I am come that ye may have life more abundantly."

Oh, ye uncertain ones, catch Isaiah's faith ; oh, ye weeping ones, see his vision ; and let us all strive after that spirituality, that holiness ; let us each strive to behold the King in his beauty, that personal Christ, that Jesus, that Friend of friends, that we may live in him as did St. Paul ; and then let us see in our fellow-men brothers whose life we would not hurt, but build up ; let our greatest happiness be to minister unto others, even as the Son of Man went about, not being ministered unto, but ministering. In that oneness of the brotherhood, let us see with faith the loving hand of God leading us, even though it be into captivity, away from friends and home, into the desert, exiled, where we, by the waters of Babylon, weep and cannot sing the songs of Zion ; but where even the wilderness of our captivity shall yet blossom as the rose, where, even in apparent separation, behold, we find ourselves nearer to God.

There is no such nearness to God as when through all processes of joy or pain we come into the presence of him whose hands bear the nail prints, whose brow bears thorns as its crown, whose throne is side by side with eternal love.

Oh, cheerfully, gladly, then, watch the unfolding of his will ; if it be by suffering, hail it joyously ; if it be through joy and prosperity, hold fast to the loving arms of his righteousness. Wherever he leads, through riches, with their great temptations, by crags and mountain peaks, still hold fast to him. Isaiah's faith shall be yours, you shall find yourself at last at one with God's will. A joy which no man can take from you shall illumine your vision, as the living coal gives light and glow to the human lip which has been touched by one of the seraphim who wing their flight from the throne of infinite life and love.

X.

ST. JOHN.

John surnamed Boanerges, which is, the Son of Thunder. — ST. MARK iii. 17.

4 October, 1891.

X.

ST. JOHN.

THE ideal life of man, the ideal that you would paint, not from the realization in your own life, but from the picture that you have drawn in your own mind, would be that of one who has gentleness, with strength; calmness, firmness, with zeal; who has love that lays hold of the very fibres of his life and expresses itself in pity, consideration, fortitude, and patient endurance. The rich man, then, is the man of such character, the man who has acquired, in expressing his acquisitiveness, such a mastery over the functions of his soul as to express the highest, the truest, the best that there is in him.

Oh, the richness of such a life! It is the richness of poverty, the richness of having poured out all the selfishness that there is in the soul, and permitting to flow in the selflessness of a great life. I honor

this thirst for such wealth, this desire for such true riches ; I honor this zeal, this acquisitiveness, only I must see all centred on that which is worthy of a man. The wealth of a great soul, the riches of vast acquisitions of life, all this expression of acquisitiveness, is altogether most desirable. The rich man ! Oh, let us see him ; let us look upon him ; for he shall be to us the ideal man, of such great wealth that he has swept into his own life the great riches of human character which God has poured down upon him so abundantly. Acquisitiveness, then, has done her best work, reaped great soul-wealth and riches, and made the ideal man both possible and actual. I make this sketch because I want men and women to take just views of their possibilities, to see that when they have gathered to themselves only such things as men call riches and wealth, they have gathered that which is altogether beneath their dignity, beneath their just and rightful consideration.

John stands before my mind as one possessed of great riches. Painters have loved to portray his features as those of a young man. Perpetual youth seems to mark his

life, whether we see it in childhood, as on the shores of Galilee he picks up pebbles or helps his father mend his nets ; or as a little boy of thirteen going to Jerusalem with his clear, bright, merry face, to attend the three periodical festivals of the holy city ; or, later on, listening to the stirring preaching of John the Baptist ; or, still later, with the calm, steadfast power of youth, receiving the terrible news of the death of his own brother James by the cruel despot, Herod ; or, again, as he stands upon the Mount of Transfiguration, the chosen companion of the Jesus whom he loves ; or in the Garden of Gethsemane, with his youthful strength giving courage and support to his Lord ; or in the full and developed powers of his manhood, as he stands beneath the cross to receive the last gift from his Master, the care of the Blessed Virgin ; or, finally, as with aged and trembling hands, when he has filled his full portion of a long life, the century of his existence having run its course, he writes the Revelation on the isle of Patmos, — still the painter loves to give him through all these stages of his career the features of youth, perpetual youth.

I sympathize with this feeling of the artist. Of course it is not true to life, yet it is true to the idealized life that the man who is rich, wealthy, great, knows nothing of beginnings of life and length of days, but has within him the fountain of perpetual life, of perennial youth; not effeminate grace, but grace and gentleness, even though accompanied by the zeal, impetuosity, nay, vehemence, of this son of thunder.

While St. John was the son of thunder in his youth, many have felt that in his later life his character in this regard was greatly changed. But son of thunder he was from the beginning, when he demanded great things of God, took hold of great segments of the circles of everlasting truth, even calling down fire from heaven. What a relation to the universe to make such colossal demands! That same characteristic follows him to the very last. His is a burning zeal for the acquisition of truth, an untiring loyalty striving to express the wealth of the life that is within him, so that he is ever the son of thunder, never losing this characteristic, only deepening, intensifying it into the larger life which becomes his as the years go on. I love to

think of him as with gentleness, meekness, calm dignity ; as the one who knows how so to love that that faculty of his soul has seized the very fibres of his being, and has become that upon which he rests his friendship, his devotion to the Lord to whom he has chosen to give himself, that foundation upon which he rests the fellowship and brotherhood of mankind. I love not only to think of St. John with his perpetual youth, but also with that strength and dignity which go to make up the rich, the wealthy, the great, and the noble.

St. John stands to me quite in the light of an ideal life,—one who has derived his life from the great source of all life, God; who has realized within himself the love that is born of God, the strength which great souls can have, and yet a strength of which they are scarcely conscious. For what great soul has ever known his own greatness? What rich spirit, possessed of great abundance of soul-wealth, has ever realized that he was more than a little child? You find illustrations of this everywhere. In the kingdom of science man first enters as a little child. Indeed there can be no door in any great

kingdom of soul-life which a child may not open, and thus enter into the greatness and richness and wealth in store for him.

I note, then, these characteristics of St. John, richness of soul and discernment of truth. Painters have loved to depict him as the one of such keenness of perception that he may soar aloft as an eagle, and, with undimmed, unfilmed eye look full upon the sun in its glory. It is the same St. John who has had the open eye, the quick perception to look full on the Sun of Righteousness, into the face of Jesus, and to see there truths, greatness of life, which others have not been quick to discern: to see there the highest expression of the soul of God. This same gentle St. John, nay, this son of thunder, becomes by the very keenness of this perception the profound philosopher, who sees that in the beginning was the Word, the Logos; before all time, this Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God; and the Word was made manifest in the flesh, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. St. John beheld with open eye his glory, full of grace and truth.

Who so well tells the mystery of the incarnation, its simplicity, sublimity, and grandeur?

Here is the basis of his philosophy, the eternal Word made flesh, the Word of God become man, nay, recognized as God because of his perfect manhood, manness. For who shall see God save through man, understand God save through the human life that speaks of God? If we are to know Jesus as the Son of God, we are to know him as the Son of man, through the fullness of his life, through its richness, through its perfection, and, seeing all this as the Son of man, we see in him the Word made flesh, the Son of God. We are to learn, then, that "he that loveth not the brother, whom he hath seen, cannot love God, whom he hath not seen." Thus we understand that when we love our brethren, whom we see (as in loving Jesus, whom also we see), we are loving God. It is the very basis of Christian fellowship, the truth upon which life, immortal, eternal life, the life of God, rests. Thus his eagle eye discerns this vital truth, and sees this life of Jesus as the salvation of human souls. It takes away sin, because it enters into

the soul as a life-giving force, producing health, and crowding out evil and soul-disease.

Although St. John represents Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, yet he takes hold of the deeper and more profound truth that propitiation means mercy. Jesus is the mercy for our sins; mercy is applied forgiveness. Forgiveness is the giving for,—the giving of life for death, wholeness for sickness, wealth for poverty, riches for great want. Thus Jesus is the “mercy” for our sins, taking the richness, the health, the wealth of God into our souls; he becomes the propitiation for our sins, not ceremonially, but vitally, actually, the applied forgiveness for our sins; and thus becomes our life. Hence the necessity of forgiveness in the life of every individual, for as Christ is, so is every man born to be. We are all possible Christs in this sense, all possible mercies for sins, so that every man must learn this primal lesson, this fundamental truth, this essential function of the life of the soul,—forgiveness. He who will not forgive, who has not learned to forgive, has burned the bridge over which he himself must one

day pass, because over the bridge of forgiveness, sooner or later, every soul must go. Forgiveness is the applied mercy of love, the expression of the life of God, and the expression of the deepest spiritual life of man ; not a weak sentiment, not a lax holding of truth, but a firm, strong laying hold upon the deepest truth of the soul, namely, this love which brings the soul into close and vital contact with God and makes a man so divine that he can rise above the fogs and mists which blind his discernment and judgment. This forgiveness makes a man so divine as to be able to apply mercy, forgiveness, to every soul that may have wronged him, and by this application of forgiveness he becomes, like God, a life-giver, a life-bestower, an out-pourer of life, and the more life he pours out, the more he has to give, for God lives by giving and by forgiving.

See St. John's zeal for the acquisition of truth. When you wish to make your boy desire riches, you show him a bit of gold, or a precious stone, or some other material form of riches, in order that you may arouse in his heart a desire for acquisition. I wonder we do not resort to the same

method in holding before child-souls the riches of the Sun of Righteousness. Why do we go through life so blind to truth, with so little desire for its acquisition, that a ruby, red with the fire of God, we value no more than a bit of broken glass?

It is told of a great picture belonging here in Massachusetts, that, when it was exposed for sale, one who was known to be able to value such a work of art was requested to visit it with the thought of purchase. After sitting before it for perhaps an hour, he went away. "Have you seen the picture?" he was asked. "Have you seen it? Are you sure you have seen it?" He went back and looked again. For the first time he saw it, and when he saw it he was aware of its great beauty and value and made the purchase. Yet we look upon the "pearl of great price," the life of Jesus in our souls; gaze upon it but walk away; we have no desire to become rich in its possession; we are not fired with the zeal to call it down from heaven, making a colossal demand for this greatness of life, richness of soul, this great wealth of spirituality as brought to us in this Son of God. If we could but discern

its value, we should buy it at whatever cost. St. John gives his whole life to buying the life of Jesus, because it is the life of God, of strength, of vitality, the life of greatness, richness, wealth, spirituality.

When a Darwin begins to discern the truth, he ceases not in his toil, day after day, year after year, burning with the desire for its acquisition. So it is with the scientific spirit, the musical spirit, the artistic spirit. When once what is of value is discerned, then the soul becomes a son of thunder, a Boanerges, and devotes all its vehemence and impetuosity, all the forces of its nature, to its acquisition. But we are indolent, idle, palsied, and have not the courage to stop and pick up the jewel, so full of sunlight that it seems to tell of the great white throne of God.

The richness of individual life is the greatest gift of God to man, and the greatest gift of man to man also. The richest gift that Jesus could give to St. John was himself. St. John lies on the bosom of Christ, and Christ loves him because of this keen discernment of truth, loves him for his zeal, for his devotion, for his great desire to become rich, for his unswerving

zeal in expressing the richness he has received. He has received the gift of Jesus, the very best gift Jesus could give of himself, and in receiving this gift he expresses it to the utmost. So in his old age he goes about saying to every one he meets, "Little children, love one another." It is not the babbling of decrepit old age, but the utterance of a soul who knew what love meant, a striving to express the gift imparted to him, an effort to make himself a continuation of the life of his Lord and Master. It is the richness of great generosity, the lavish outpouring of what one has received. We see the beginnings of such a spirit as this when, sometimes, a man of wealth seeks to give to his town a free library, or a hospital, or makes other provision for the convenience of the general public. This desire to express the richness which has come into the life is one of the noblest traits in human nature. Yet how are you and I striving to express any richness which has come into our lives,—how striving to pour out from the vast storehouses of our souls the spirituality which God has showered so abundantly into their deepest recesses?

I know not what you will do with this life of our Lord to-day, but I know the day will come, — it may not come now, nor to-morrow, this year or next, — but I know the day will come when, with St. John, you will be able to write a cipher across the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life ; when, taking those things up which the world calls riches, fame, and glory, all that can gratify the sense of living or pride of being, all that men would value as to be desired or acquired, you shall write a positive mark of falseness across them, realize their worthlessness, realize the richness of Christ, and take up this ruby so filled with the fire of God as to make you feel that the very vitality of God is struggling within it ; take up this life of Jesus and follow it. That day must come. Pray God it may come quickly, when you can say in the words of St. John, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” For when he comes, oh, how rich you are ; what acquisitions are yours ; how you rise above the marshes and swamps, the tangle, the under-growth, the valleys ; how you creep up the hillsides ; how you reach the mountain tops ; how on eagle’s wings you soar above

the clouds, and reach the sun in its full glory, and with clear, open eye behold the king in his beauty of holiness! Yes, you behold the king in his beauty, and in the vision you become rich, great, strong,—a son of thunder, a disciple whom Jesus loves. You become in a very large and real sense a son of God and a joint heir with Christ.

XI.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

I am the good shepherd. — ST. JOHN x. 11.

12 April, 1891.

XI.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

THIS is a beautiful parable of the Good Shepherd. There is an exquisite tenderness in it. It has the delicacy of truth. There is something in the nature of truth so exquisite and so delicate as to transcend any possible analysis. It comes to us with the force of truth, and we recognize it as such. It escapes and eludes us when we attempt to subject it either to dissection or to analysis. I listen to music, and I may not say that thus and thus are the waves of sound piled one upon another. There is this same exquisite delicacy about it that eludes me, yet I feel its truth. I am led captive by its sway ; my soul is brought into a state of rejoicing. Lo, there stands before me a character of great beauty, sublimity, profundity, — all those elements which go to constitute greatness, a character which thus becomes admirable. I

may not succeed altogether in analyzing the nature of this character and be able to say that this went to make up his courage, that his bravery, this his large-mindedness, and so on, but standing before me he commends the truthfulness of his nature to mine, and I accept it.

It has seemed to me that the more we strive after a comprehension and an apprehension of truth, the more we find ourselves in the difficulty of inability to subject it to analysis, and are able simply to throw wide the portals of the soul that it may in its experience receive the truth. We may say of a certain production of art that up to a given point it commends itself to our mind and we receive it with a degree of joy and gladness, but beyond that point it seems to elude analysis. In art, therefore, it is measurably true that analysis is impracticable, while in the most transcendent phases of truth it seems to be altogether impossible. Truth therefore comes to us without our ability to analyze its component parts; it simply commends itself to us as such. I stand now before the sublime character of him who calls himself "the Good Shepherd." In this par-

able there is that delicacy of touch, that exquisite tenderness, which make me feel that, beyond question, he is the Good Shepherd.

Let us see, if we may, what it is that is promised in our text.

The good shepherd is the shepherd who cares more for his sheep than for himself; becomes attached to these helpless animals ; cares more for their safety than for his own ; else, in the hour of danger, or imminent peril, when, possibly, he might lose his own life, he would flee, and make good his own personal safety, and thus prove himself not to be a shepherd. The good shepherd, then, cares more for the welfare of these helpless brutes in his charge than for his own safety. He also is to see that they have what they need, not what they think they need, for the wisdom of sheep is not preëminent. We speak of sheep as following example, and as not able to select what is really good for them. But the good shepherd will see that they have what they most need. He will see that they have the clear sparkling waters, the green fields, protection from the storm, safe pathways over the rocks, through the narrow passes,

through the tangled thicket; that they shall be conducted safely to the pasturage and return safely to the fold. They shall have provided for them what is most necessary to their best welfare.

All we, like sheep, have gone astray. Is it so? Are we able to provide for ourselves that which we most need? Have we sufficient wisdom, far-sightedness, ability to take all circumstances so into consideration as to be able to determine what we most need, what is best for us? Experiencing this inability to always determine what is best for us, we instinctively turn to others for an example to imitate.

The boy looks up to the swinging gait of the man as he walks along the street and almost catches his swagger. It is the same old story, this inability to determine what is best for us, this desire to look up to and imitate some one, to take some one for our leader. Sometimes we take a hireling who cares not for us, and we imitate him. The danger comes, and the hireling fleeth, — because he is a hireling. Sometimes that hireling is our own self-will. We say, "I will find for myself the quiet waters and green pastures. I know

these mountain fastnesses ; I understand these intricate paths ; I think I can thread my way through the tangled thicket ; I know the world pretty well ; I can take care of myself," till a lacerated, pinched, starved soul staggers back from dry torrent bed and barren mountain side,—back to the fold for shelter and gentle care,—learning late the outcome of his self-will, the result of determining in his own limited wisdom what is best for him.

I would not say this if I did not believe that you were made for the very best, that the possibility is in you of the very best ; if I did not believe that you had a right to have the very best shepherd that can possibly be given to you ; if I did not know that, as you sit before me to-night, there is within you such priceless value by reason of the possibilities that lie there, that you ought to have the very best of leaders, the very best of shepherds. It is not best for you that you should spiritually starve. It is not best that you should be lost on the mountain tops, that you should be alone, and hungry spiritually. It is not best that this poor lost wandering lamb in the mountain pastures should have his young coat, which

should be luxuriant and rich, rough, poor, and worthless. Nor is it best for you that you should be without the richest spiritual pastures, the purest, most sparkling, clearest waters, the best of shepherds, the only one worthy of you, — he who calls himself the Good Shepherd.

You are cheating yourself each time you take a hireling to be your leader. Why may we not believe this? Why not put away all hirelings, banish all self-will? I wish we could see that hatred, malice, or vindictiveness, that neglect or indifference, that pride, spiritual or worldly, that covetousness or self-seeking, are all phases of self-will, sins that surely sap the vitality of all noblest living, are all of the spirit of the hireling, and that we might say to them collectively, You shall no longer claim to be my shepherd, my guide; in my need you forsook me; in my peril you abandoned me; you fled because you were a hireling, and you are not able to lead me to the fold where I belong. This is an allegory, but is it not absolutely and plainly true that your life does not reach its highest mark when you are taking for its leader a shepherd other than the best life the

world has ever known and Heaven has had to give? Think of the young musician who should take an inferior master for his instructor, or the hopeful young artist who should take for his teacher some one who neither knew his art nor cared for his pupil. Think you, when you come to the delicate organization of your soul, that you do not need the best? And the beauty of it all is that the best is so glad to be your leader. Hear him: "I came not to be ministered unto." Hear him, this King of kings and the Lord of lords: "I am come to minister." He came to serve you as your Good Shepherd, because you needed him, and because of the possibilities that lie within you of becoming fit companions, notice this,— fit companions of the Good Shepherd. For he says, "I know my sheep," and these words are spoken with the same tongue that elsewhere said, "Ye are my friends." "I know my sheep," — as if he were to say, I look down into your hearts and see every perplexity you have, every trouble, every uncertainty. I know every striving of your soul; I am in sympathy with you; I am touched with every effort you make. I know my sheep,

and they know me. And then he links this companionship with that which he has with the Father : "I know my sheep and they know me. I and my Father are one."

He who runs may understand this parable of the Good Shepherd. It needs no careful exposition, no skillful analysis, it appeals at once to the human consciousness, to your heart and to mine, and we recognize that in that Good Shepherd we have one our soul needs, who knows us and is known by us.

Then, as if he were to bring to a close this beautiful parable, he says, " You are enfolded, you are cared for, I know you and am known by you, and I am your Good Shepherd as you are my faithful sheep." "I am the Shepherd and the Bishop of your souls ; I lead you, direct you, and guide you." But even then he ceases not. "Other sheep have I, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring with me ; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." A necessary prophecy ! for if he be the Good Shepherd he will not forget the one sheep on the mountains lost. There is the parable of the ninety

and nine. He does not forget the one lost sheep. He could not if he were the Good Shepherd, and if it is a brother or sister who is lost, or if you yourselves are lost, that Good Shepherd has not forgotten you. "Them also I must bring with me." Oh, the necessity of love, the imperative necessity! "I must bring them with me." He will seek you. He will bring you home. He may have to drag you through the thorny thicket, your flesh may be lacerated, but in his arms you are held, the fold is not far distant; there you shall be with him. I like to say this because it is so encouraging to know that God will yet have your lost friend or brother or sister, and in his own good time he will have you also. He is not done with you, nor will he be till your heart is made like the heart of a little child, soft, tender, gentle, patient, loving. Though it were the heart of a Nero, yet this shall come to pass. "There shall be one fold and one shepherd." The strife of tongues, even though they be called Christian tongues, shall cease; and wranglings and bitterness and feuds, even though they be called Christian wranglings, bitterness, and feuds, shall come to an

end ; and the fellowship in Christ, and of Christ, and with Christ, as the Bishop of our souls, the one Good Shepherd, shall be established,—the unity of God's family, when brother shall greet brother eye to eye, and shall realize that the omnipotent Shepherd does not stay his never-failing power till he shall have accomplished the miracle of ages, the unity of those for whom he laid down his life ; for the Good Shepherd giveth, and continueth to give, and ever will give his life for the sheep.

Do not go away from here to-night until you have looked fairly in the face that Good Shepherd as you have never beheld him before. Do not feel that you may wander and stray from his side. See in him the one who is to perform the mighty work in your soul of bringing you into the gentle, loving companionship of him, the most exquisite being the world has ever seen, the Good Shepherd of the sheep.

XII.

THE CHURCH.

Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it. —

EPH. v. 25.

26 April, 1891.

XII.

THE CHURCH.

CHRIST so loved the church that he gave himself to it, body, soul, and spirit. He gave all that there was in him to give. For it he realized all the redemptive forces of human life. He redeemed it. He loved it that he might sanctify it and cleanse it, and present it unto himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, holy, without blemish. I want you to love the church, because Christ loved it ; because to love it is to love Christ. The personal element is inherent in the very consideration of this subject, because the church is composed of human souls, God's children, — of all human souls who have responded to the call of "Friend, come up higher." It is no wonder, then, Christ loved it. It is here to call human souls to come out of sin into holiness, to come from an abnormal to a normal condition of life, and

so St. Paul speaks of it as the “body of Christ,” of which Christ is the head.

This body has imperfections, but because it is that body of which Christ is the head we do not cut off here a hand, take out there an eye, mutilate the possibilities of usefulness of the body, simply because they have imperfections. Christ loves the members of his own body with the hopefulness of love that these members may come out from their sin, respond to the call to holiness, and become through him sanctified and cleansed : that they may be presented to him with an entire abnegation, consecration, and devotion ; that they may be a glorious church. To this state of life they are called, and therefore it is because of these possibilities that they may constitute a glorious church, that Christ loves them.

The purpose of the church is to serve the head. Is it not ? The purpose of the members of the body is to serve the head of the body,—the hands to do by skill and aptness that for which they are constituted in grateful ministry to the demands and necessities indicated by the head ; the feet to be swift to do the errands of life and

the message of usefulness. So it is all through the ministry of the body : the members are to serve the head, and the purpose of the church is not primarily to save the individual, as it is not primarily the purpose of the head to save the fingers and the hands and the feet, but in the discharge of their natural and necessary functions they are necessarily saved. As soon as my hand and arm may have exercise,—that is, in discharging the natural function of the hand and of the arm,—that moment they are saved from uselessness, from decay, from death. If I bind my hand or my arm to my side in utter uselessness, it is only a question of time when it shall be utterly without power, seized of death. So the primary object is that the hand or the arm may each discharge its natural function, and the primary object of the church is that the members of the church may serve the head.

Of course, in saying this, we are recognizing the worthiness of the head of the church of Jesus Christ, as the one perfect human life whom it is the call to serve. So that the end of the church is that it may grow “into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

What a broad view you have of human life and of salvation ; what dignity for man, this exalting him to be a member of Jesus Christ, the one perfect life, the one manifestation of the Godlike to man, that as a member of Christ he is thus discharging the purpose of his being, that he is serving Christ, that he is a member of Christ in active, willing, ready service, and that it is the end of his life that he shall grow into the measure of the stature of the fullness of that Christ ! It is hard for us to realize, with all these finite surroundings, that we are hands and feet and arms and eyes of him who is the perfect life ; that we are members of him ; that it is our purpose to serve him, and our end and destiny to be like him, so that we may be made a glorious church.

The continuity of this church is self-evident. It is here to-day, is it not ? There are human souls to-day who have responded to the call, "Friend, come up higher," who have entered into the realization of the purpose of their being, who have taken Jesus Christ as their head ; and as the church is here to-day, so it was here yesterday, one hundred years ago, five hun-

dred years ago, and a thousand years ago, till we get back to the very beginning, nearly two thousand years ago. There has been this continuity of the church, because the church is the body of Christ, because it is the continued life of Christ.

Behold the responsibility, then, that rests upon us as members of him to continue his life in the world. It is also a witness to the fact of the necessity of an organized fellowship of the body of Christ. The hand alone may not discharge its function. The foot, separated from the body, cannot discharge its function. In the very construction of human life there is the necessity of an organized body. Hence there is a church, the visible, tangible body of Jesus Christ perpetuating the life of Christ among men.

The church witnesses also to the necessity which lies, in the very nature of things, in the constitution of human life, for the fellowship of spiritual help and worship among brethren. We may reason about this as we choose, but it remains that we need the comfort, the assurance, the inspiration of other souls, and he who holds himself aloof from visible and organic con-

nection with the church has a serious charge to lay to his own conscience, since he has withheld strength and comfort and inspiration from those other members of Christ's body who need it. What right have I to say, "I will live alone"? "No man liveth unto himself." What right have you or I to say, "I will stand outside of the church and refuse such inspiration, or comfort, or help, or sympathy, as I may possibly be able to impart to others"? We do not stand alone; and in this we recognize a debt which each member owes to every other member of the one great family of God.

Because of these considerations, that Christ loved the church as his own body, and because of the nature and of the purpose of the church, because of this continuity ever expressing the life of the church, because of this necessity for fellowship, the church is a divine institution: divine because it is a part of him who alone is divine, divine because the church is the body of him who is the expressed image of holiness, and divine because it calls human souls to a divine state of life. It is divine also because the changes it works in the

lives of men are divine, and because the mission, the work, the ministry, the possibilities of the expression of human life are also divine. What spiritual development can there be without the sympathy, the comfort, the help, the inspiration which we may give to other souls to live broader, nobler, better lives? The church, then, is a divine institution, and the marks of the church are those which characterized it at first, and only those.

We read in the forty-second verse of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that those early disciples, those early members of the church, those early parts of that body of which Christ was the head, continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, in their fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers, and those marks are ever to be marks of the members of the body of Christ, in every day and in every generation.

The apostles' doctrine, reduced to its simple form, what is it? You have it standing there in the Apostles' Creed, and even this is reduced to a simpler form. It was, and is, and ever shall be, a belief in God. "This is life eternal to know thee,

the only God." It is where the human soul arises, stands on its feet ; ventures to lift its eyes, to look upward and into the Father's face, and comes with affectionate trust to believe in God the Father. Oh, what a sublime doctrine that is ! The apostles' doctrine, the martyrs' doctrine, the confessors' doctrine, the doctrine of saints, the doctrine of Christ — belief in God. Nothing is said, or should be said (which would be an impertinence here), of belief about God. A thousand and one difficulties might thus arise. We as individuals might never reach a consensus of thought and opinion in striving to give expression to our thought about God, whereas the one holy catholic church can lift its heart as one soul and say, " I believe in God." And the necessary expression of this belief is the belief in Christ, through whom alone we know the fullness of God. Who else has so expressed the universal life as this same Jesus ? and what marvel is it, therefore, that he said, " This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent " ? The soul, as it rises in spiritual consciousness of its own powers and of the reality of its spirit-

ual being, loves to trust in Jesus, to believe in Christ, adores this beauty of holiness, and folds to its heart the divine sublimity of the life of Jesus.

The apostles' doctrine, then, is one of the marks of the church, a belief in God, in Christ, and in Christ's continued light, the Holy Spirit. For, as has been said, as we may think of God as a ray of pure white light, incapable of being apprehended by the eye until it be broken into prismatic hues by the life of Jesus, so the Holy Spirit may be thought of as that continued light reaching the earth, softening the soul with generative force, bringing into beauty the powers of nature, softening the heart of man, and developing and quickening the spiritual life.

"They continued also in the apostles' fellowship." And what was that? Members of the same body. Who are the members? Every human soul is called to be a member. Every human soul has the privilege of being a member. Every human soul has within him the obligation to be a member. Every human soul is a child of God, and to every soul the call is, "Friend, come up higher." Those who

have responded to that call, and by the initial step of baptism have signified their response to that call, — for in baptism there is a taking of the belief in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, — those who have responded to that call, then, are to live in that fellowship as brethren one of another.

But some shall say, We cannot love all men, for many are unlovable, degraded, repulsive, brutal. Oh, that is anti-Christian! Christ loved all men, not so much for what they are, as for what they are destined to be. Because this poor hand is deformed, shall I love it the less? God made it. It is part of my body; it may, though imperfectly, serve the body, and I must love these members of my body which God has made. This is Christian socialism. So the obligation rests upon every human soul to love his brother as himself, not because of his perfections, but because of the possibilities that are within him, because of the source whence he came, and because of his being a child of the same heavenly Father.

In this fellowship there is unity, or there should be. Offenses must come, but “woe

to him by whom the offense cometh." On our hearts and souls and consciences there may be, this morning, the burden of the offense that we have been hindering this unity of the body of Christ. What right have I to say to the hand, "I have no need of thee"? and why do we dare point to another child of God, as if in derision, because his way of serving the same God is not our way? How much responsibility there may be resting upon us for hindering this possible unity of all souls who hold Jesus as their head, who are members of the church! In that unity of the church there must be fellowship, and I believe that we should do everything within our power, even to the changing of canons, to cement that fellowship and to seal it with the devotion of our own lives. We have longed, perchance theoretically, for organic unity, and yet have shut the door in the face of those who were also seeking for this unity. Remember that the marks of the church are those things which characterized the infant church and no more, and he who ignores those marks is not fulfilling the requirements of a member of the body of Christ.

As to the Christian ministry, as a matter of fact there are three orders, bishops, priests, and deacons, and there have been such for many centuries.

"But the case of St. Paul receiving his apostleship direct from God and not from the apostles (who might have exhibited an unwillingness to impart it to him) is a perpetual protest against the danger of human interference in things concerning the closest relations of the spirit of man with God." This is the way another puts it. Moreover we have nearly lost one order in our imperfect diaconate, not lost actually, yet practically, because we pass from the diaconate to the priesthood merely as from one step to another. Yet who would be justified in repelling us merely because we had allowed the diaconate to slip out of recognition? And so, have you and I any right to avoid others because they have suffered another order of the ministry to fall into disuse? Even the Roman Church, has she retained her episcopate? It is not a time for us to judge our brethren, but for us to accept gratefully any real beginnings of a unity among Christians, any possible realization of the communion of saints.

Then there is the “breaking of the bread,” which stands in the minds of theologians for the sacraments, baptism and the Lord’s supper. There the sacraments have stood from the beginning, in one form or another, with the essence always the same. They stand there as perpetual monuments of the continuity of the apostolic church, as the continuity of the Christian church, the continuity of the incarnation of the life of Christ. What your opinion about them may be is not pertinent to this discussion. It is simply for us to preserve these marks of the church, and in grateful gladness accept what the good, true head of the church provides.

As to the worship, we read that the early church continued steadfast “in the prayers.” And see what our privileges are. Here we open this prayer book. We do not care to present one single argument for its value. We simply say : “Here is a book of very rich treasures.” I open it at random, and find in it the Psalms of David, full of words that have expressed the uplifting of human souls for nearly three thousand years, and I make no comment. I open it again at random, and I find the

Lord's Prayer, that outpouring of the holy life of Jesus, who taught us thus to pray, and for very nearly two thousand years these words have been uttered by millions, and I make no comment. I turn to it again at random, and I find the "Gloria in Excelsis." It has been there since 633, and possibly since the year 300, and through all these intervening centuries it has expressed the outpouring of divine praise. Again, I find the hymn called the "Te Deum," and since the year 527, and possibly even earlier, it has been sung as a grateful Christian pæan to Almighty God. Thus I turn at random up and down the pages of this same book, and I find that nearly four fifths of it are in phrases taken directly from the holy Scriptures, and still I make no comment.

But this book is the heritage and property of every human soul that will take it. There is no exclusive ownership in it. It belongs to every human soul.

In speaking, therefore, of the church, as to her doctrine, as to her fellowship, as to her ministry, as to her sacraments, as to her form of worship, as to her liturgy, the service of the holy communion, which has

stood there substantially as it is now since the year 150, we speak not so much of rights as of privileges.

The rights of the church we are silent about, but of the privileges of the church let us speak with outpouring and grateful hearts. And should not the heart pour itself out in gratitude? As it is every man's duty to preach and to pray, so it must be every man's duty to praise God in grateful, loving service for the priceless blessings he has given us in the church which he loves.

As to personal responsibility, remember the words of St. Paul, that Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, you and me, that he might cleanse it, you and me, that he might present it unto himself, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; and in his own good time God will accomplish that, so that you and I shall be presented to him, holy and without blemish. Remember these words, then. Remember your privilege as members of his body, to serve him who is the head of the church, and remember also your destiny, to grow unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

XIII.

ALL SAINTS'.

Let not your heart be troubled. — ST. JOHN xiv. 1-6.

1 November, 1891.

XIII.

ALL SAINTS'.

If our Lord were to stand here to-day, on this glorious thanksgiving morning,—for such is All Saints' day to rejoicing souls,—I think he would say just such words as we have taken now from his lips. I think he would say, If ye believe in God, be of good cheer. If ye trust in God ; if ye know that beneath your sorrow are the everlasting arms ; if ye know that your feet, as they seem to slip, are stayed on the everlasting Rock of Ages ; then, if so ye trust and believe and know, let not your heart be troubled. Be of good cheer. Ye know the world, and the world hates you, falsifies your life and your character, despises you, torments you, and persecutes you. But what of that ? As gold is tried in the fire, so sorrow, and sin, and temptation, and grief, and affliction, and all that you sum up and say, “ This is pain,” shall

work their perfect work, and from out the furnace, the dross left behind, ye shall come. Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. I who endured for you the cross, the tree of sin, and despised the shame, and was persecuted and buffeted and tormented, I who had not where to lay my head, I say to you, Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."

You hear me say: "In my Father's home." You have thought in your short-sightedness, or in your doubt, or in your hesitancy, or in your unbelief (which I pity), —you have thought that my Father's house is a small spot in the universe. You do not realize that it is my Father's home, and that wherever you are you are not absent from it. His heart circles the globe. From its warm embrace no child of his can escape, and where my Father's heart is, —where his life is, —there is his home; and in it are many stopping places, many abiding places, many staying places, where a man may rest, faint with the journey, dust-covered, soiled, begrimed, footsore, in distress, outcast, forsaken, —many stopping

places where such may rest, but they are always in my Father's home. And when you, a pilgrim, stumbling, oppressed, lacerated, mastered for a moment because of your temptation — nay, because of your sin and crime ; even there where you stumble, fall down, where you are prostrated, is a stopping place in my Father's home. When another form of trial comes to you, pain, grief, affliction, or bereavement ; when you pause again, this time to close the eyes of those you love, it is still a stopping place in the Father's home, where you are held in the Father's heart, embraced by the Father's love. Underneath are still the everlasting arms.

Enfolded in his arms in the moment of your bereavement, as well as in the moment of your transgression, affliction, doubt, or despair, it is but a stopping place where you halt, it is but a staying place in the Father's home. And when again a certain rivulet is reached, where we pause, yet spring gently from bank to bank as from life to life, even as when before the gate of death we pause, it is only another staying place in the Father's home. "In my Father's house are many mansions : if it

were not so, I would have told you." They are his mansions. They are in his house. It is another way of saying,—of course, it is figurative; our Lord is speaking in parable,—it is another way of saying that, come what will, nothing shall separate us from the love of God, whether it be sorrow, trial, affliction, transgression, sin, chastisement, whatsoever may come to us, nothing can shut out the Father's presence.

If we believe in God (or, appealing to the nobler side of our life, our Lord refuses to make it conditional, and says: "Ye believe in God"), be strong, be brave. Let the arm once more resume its power and vigor. Be strong, because of the victories that faith has won. Time would fail me to speak of Barak and David and Samson and Jephtha — those who were persecuted, sawn asunder, clad in sheepskins and goat-skins and wandered in the desert, but because of their faith they were not troubled. They were of good cheer. Their life was linked with the life of him who had conquered, and, in being faithful unto death, they knew (figure again) they should be crowned with life. Man cannot receive life in its largeness and fullness except on

the ground of faith. His life must rest on faith. His largeness of being must find its bottom foundation stone in trust. He must find himself rooted,—radically, only radical souls take hold fully of life,—man must be rooted in the life of God, by faith by trust, by belief ; and then, superior to man's infirmities, superior to his temptations, what may man do to him ?

“Let not your heart be troubled.” Do not try to carry this world on your shoulders. It is God's world ; not yours. Do not try to carry the welfare of your own soul, even, on your own shoulders. It is God's soul ; not yours. Responsibility in its larger sense belongs not to you, but only in its limited sense. God has assumed in the very nature, in the very condition of his being, the largest, fullest responsibility (and is he not equal to it ?). It remains for you and me and every human soul to trust, to believe, to lean, and God will carry his own world and all that dwelleth therein, and you in particular. We have reversed this. We have fancied that the weight of the world's welfare rests upon us. We have felt that with us is the responsibility of the welfare of our souls. Not so if we

have the first condition of life — namely, belief in God. “God’s in his heaven — All’s right with the world” and with every individual in the world. “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” This is not equivalent to saying that it matters not how a man lives. It matters everything. Only, when he has taken hold of life, his responsibility ceases ; when he has taken hold of God, then God completes the growth. I do not think that the tree says to itself, “I must take care that in April there is a bud, and, a little later, there is a leaf, and, still later on, a blossom, and then fruit.” If the life of the tree were altogether artificial, if it were altogether arbitrary, dramatic, unreal, unvital, then I think the tree should be much troubled, much concerned for the flower and fruitage, not only of its own, but of all other trees. But if the tree be vital and real, if it have life, if it be not arbitrary, artificial, dramatic, if its roots strike deep to find the wellspring of life that it may take hold of life more fully and largely, then it has no responsibility, no accountability. It has no anxiety as to its

growth, its leafage, its blossom, its harvest. So the soul that stays on God has no cause, or ground, or reason, for being troubled as to its future ; nay, or as to its present. Nor has it anything to do with the past. The tree must not, does not, turn back and say, " Thus was I wounded when the storm raged ; thus was I rent asunder by the lightning's stroke ; thus was I blasted ; thus became I gnarled, and, looking back, I am filled with fear and trembling." Not thus does the tree groan, but the past is gone—dead. Nature heals the wound, and by the process of the law of life it takes on new strength. Just as the acorn does not say, " Thus am I overcome by disintegrating forces ; thus am I made to perish in the soil." It is all true, and so the acorn might have said, were the acorn contrary to the law of life, if it did not repose on the life that was above, beneath and around it, — it might have said, " I cannot endure this disintegrating process — I cannot die." Yet die it must, but without tears or regret, and in its dying it takes hold of life, and the forest monarch is the justification of the acorn's entombment and death !

"Be of good cheer. Let not your heart be troubled." Tempest tossed, tempest pelted and beaten, tempest swayed and rocked, tempest down-thrown, be not troubled; for when he who utters this was beaten upon by the fiercest storm the malignity of hateful men could cause to beat upon him, they erected what they thought to be a tree of disgrace, but it proved a throne, and on it they lifted him, and enthroned there, he thus drew all men unto him.

"And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." The intimacy of the relationship is not only not severed by what we call death, it is not even jarred. The communion, one fellowship, one life, one body, one universe, has its own continuity. What a prophetic vision St. Paul had, to look with discerning eye through all these misty centuries, thick with the fog of blinding superstitions, and see, with penetrating clearness, what we are only beginning to see! Therefore because there is no separation from this cloud of witnesses by which we are surrounded, because the ground of their being is the same as the ground of our be-

ing,—namely, God,—the time will come when we shall see that the violet and the oak are inseparable in their oneness of life, and you, humble, obscure, as out of the way of observation as the modest violet, shall one day find your life joined to the lives of the greatest spirits — like St. Paul's — the world has ever seen, that your life is knit to Christ's; because the ground of your life is the same as the ground of the life of every other soul, and the same as the life of Christ. “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Let not your heart be troubled, therefore, either about this world, or about what comes to you. Taking for granted that ye believe in God,—and how can a man fail to believe in God? He may, with stammering lips and faltering tongue, be unable to formulate any belief as a more gifted brother can do, but what man feeling life in him, about him, beneath him, and around him, can fail to believe in God?—taking for granted, then, belief in God, let not your heart be troubled. Nothing can come to you of whatsoever nature that shall not minister,—I will not check the application of that nor limit it,—whatso-

ever shall come to you shall in some way minister to the proving of your soul, to the building up your nature into the likeness of God. Look at David. There are greater souls here than David's. He took as much of life as he was capable of receiving, but when Christ gives a man larger visions he becomes more filled with life and with God. And because these souls, like Isaiah's, like St. John the Evangelist's, like that of Moses, like that of the countless throng that no man can number, because these souls have grown — I think I must say grown by reason of everything that has come to them — so be assured, "Let not your heart be troubled." Whatever of affliction, transgression, disappointment, apparent failure, distress, or sin, whatever seems to tear and rend asunder the very fibres of your being, remember that they all, in God's making, conforming, and loving hand, shall minister to the upbuilding, the perfecting, the ultimate justification of your souls. It is a joyous gospel this, this gospel of good cheer, that finds its basis in the life of God.

"And the way ye know." Still we are so blind, dull, stupid, we do not under-

stand, while all the time the way lies before us. Must the sun, shining bright and clear, explain himself, showing his credentials, when he is fructifying every force and potency in the universe? Must the Christ, the light of life, explain himself further to those who are of dull ear and slow heart, and listen, but do not comprehend? Do you not see that he who shines in the full warmth and power of life must be the Sun of righteousness? And the pathway that his brilliant effulgence makes, streaming from the throne of God into the darkest, most noisome valleys of earth, must be the way for human souls to tread. Must he still say: "I am the light," when the light is shining full on the face of the darkened soul so perplexed in the deepening twilight, till suddenly there bursts from the western sky the clear bright light of him who said: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"? So he tells Thomas (oh, I do not want to hear him tell me again), "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Because, O Jesus! thou art the way, the truth, and the life, because thou comest, because thou goest, because thou returnest,

because the intimacy of that close communion and fellowship is not even jarred by what I have blindly called the article of death, therefore those whom thou hast led before me through the dark valley and the shadow to shining heights in thy eternal presence,—I shall not be troubled concerning them. All the saints are with thee; I cannot be troubled about them, for I believe in God, and I believe also in thee, O Son of God, O Word of God, O Light of God, O Life of God, O Way and Truth of God ! ”

Ring out the bells of joy, then, for all thy saints in light, and may we grow,—grow as everything in nature calls out to us to join their chorus in growth. Oh, could our ears but catch the note of growing nature’s song ! May we grow day by day, grace by grace, into the likeness of him, the captain of our salvation, the author, the finisher of our faith. “ Ye believe in God, believe also in me ! ”

XIV.

VINES OF SAMARIA.

Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of
Samaria.—JER. xxxi. 5.

20 September, 1891.

XIV.

VINES OF SAMARIA.

THIS is the sure hope, the calm, steadfast optimism, the confident belief rooted in the depths of reason, bound fast by the very fibres of a soul that has seen God face to face : "Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria," and the vines stand for sustenance, nourishment, cheer, prosperity, for the soul's welfare. It is the hope, the reasonable hope, the firm conviction of Jeremiah, both for himself and for his people, that the soul's prosperity is sure with God. The soul's vine may not appear to be growing ; its roots may be covered from sight, planted out in the dark valleys where little of sunlight and possible development can come to it. For every man knows that upon the hill-sides the vines grow best, yet the time shall come (as I hope we may yet say, must come), when on the hilltops "shalt

thou yet plant vines." It is the hope, the calm deliberate conviction, of every soul that has seen God. It rests in the knowledge of God.

The husbandman rests the hope of his harvest upon the knowledge of seedtime and harvest; it is no guess. The parent rests the future of his child on the knowledge whence the gift, or the knowledge of the growth, of the increased strength and health of the child, and makes his plans for the child's future accordingly. The physician knows, not guesses, that all nature tends toward recovery, and on this knowledge rests his hope, his calm deliberate hope, of returning health, strength, and vigor. When this knowledge has come to souls, it has come sometimes as a light from heaven, striking the hidden genius of God which lies dormant in every human being; striking forth its latent fire till it illuminates the individual spiritual nature, and, in some instances, sets ablaze the world with the molten gold, the glory of holiness, as in such souls as those of Moses, Isaiah, and this prophet Jeremiah, and John the Evangelist, and St. Paul, and our blessed Lord, and in countless saints, con-

fessors, martyrs in all centuries, even to this present moment, where in humble cot and rude cabin, nay, in king's palace, and in the abode of the rich, there are souls whose genius for good has been touched by this knowledge of God, till they are illuminated with the confidence of their soul's progress in him, that all is well with them, that their vine shall yet be planted on the mountain hilltops of Samaria.

Such men have seen God face to face ; they are never the same again.

You cannot take away from them this vision ; it has burned itself into their souls. They are as full of God as the red blossomed tulip is of fire. No arguments can rob them of it. No metaphysical subtleties can deprive them of this reality ; as who shall say, " We will withdraw from the sunlight until we have examined the theories of colors and prismatic hues." Having seen God, they know in whom they have believed. You are never again the same after this coming into the presence of God and seeing him face to face. The warp and woof of your soul's history is being woven constantly, and you may not

pull out this thread of rich red glory, this vision of God ; it is a part of your soul's life.

This knowledge of God is the knowledge of the God whom Christ hath revealed. Christ declares him as a God of love, of life, of personality, of all that is positive as implied in these terms, and not negative. It is absolute unreason to think of God in his infinity as including evil as well as good, hate as well as love, the negative as well as the positive, death as well as life. So I firmly believe. Language must always bear its own limitations. I may not express, by any terms I am able to employ, the accurate story of my soul, of my life ; nor may I say all that is true of God when I try to describe him in terms of love, of life, of personality ; but I only say that what is positive rests in God and the negative has no place in him, and while I may delude myself with all sorts of intellectual vagaries, I realize the unreason of it all when I make him a God of confusion, not of order, of death and not of life. God reveals himself, he declares himself to me, to my soul, to my reason, to all my faculties, as life, positive, full, and complete.

I speak to God from my soul as to a person realizing all the time the limitations of the term, and yet I say "person" because it describes the highest expression of life with which I am familiar. I do not say it describes the highest expression of life yet to be declared, for of this I know nothing, and whenever that higher expression is made clear to me I shall take the higher term to describe it; but till then, "person" describes the highest expression of life.

God lives, and because he is life there is association. There cannot be life without association. Solitariness is of death. The very awfulness of sin is that it separates, isolates, cuts off, leaves standing alone, and because alone "the wages of sin is death." Solitariness is death. Life carries with it the necessary thought of association, and because of this association my soul must live. It is unreason to think even of God as alone. He needs your soul. God cannot live without your soul. He cannot live alone; it is a contradiction in terms. The very thought of God without human life is impossible, and my hope, my sure, calm hope, my conviction of the prosperity of

my soul, rests in the very being of the life of God, in the very thought of association. I cannot take him out of the universe, nor can I take my soul out of the world. And because my soul is in the universe, as are the planets as they swing in their courses, — nay, for a greater reason than can touch the stars, because I am in the universe as a soul, and because God is life, and because life implies association, — the one cannot and will not live without the other. Though I may be dwelling in the valleys, buried from sight, yet as God lives, so my soul cannot be taken out of this universe of association and life. It must, one day or other, creep up the sides of the mountains and blossom on the hilltop. My soul must prosper; bask in the sunshine of his life. I must say to my soul, "Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria." Thus the ultimate thought of God is life, and there cannot be life without association. Why, it is the very cardinal principle of Christianity — fellowship, association, life with life. Your soul is in the world, that is, in the universe, and it cannot be taken out. You may not pull down the sun from his throne, and no man

may tear my soul from God, and the hour must come when the soul shall prosper, shall live, shall glorify itself, and so glorify its Maker.

As this is the revelation of the revealer ; as it is the discovery of the discoverer ; as it is the unfolding of the unfolder, the utterance of him who is the spoken, the eternal Word, the manifestation of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God ; as it is the Word made flesh ; as this is the truth that flashes from the face of the soul of him who is the Sun of Righteousness, — so it is the truth that binds our souls to life eternal, for this is life eternal to know thee, God, and no man can take this life from us.

This manifestation of God in Christ shows us who God is, in whom we believe, and it shows us who man is. Inferentially, we have already discovered in this revelation of God somewhat of the nature of man. We have seen how man's soul is essentially a part of God, of the essence of God. We have seen that this soul of man cannot be taken from God. Every manifestation of truth in the individual is a manifestation of God. Whenever we read the book of any great life, do we not sometimes

feel, as we are told of the achievement of this great man and that, as if we ourselves could triumph like Job, or like Moses free a people? It is the divine that is welling up in you, the oneness you have with all human life, the participation you experience in all truth. And when you come to Christ, you feel that what he is, is possible for you also. The genius of spirituality is within every human soul, and when the moment comes and the eyes are opened and the man awakes to see who and what he is, behold, he is touched by God, and all things become possible to him. So all men are born to be parts of God, to be like Christ. Every man has within him this genius of spirituality that is to seize the divine fire of God, and in that fire to see God's face bright and clear in his own soul, and thus he himself is to illuminate mankind.

As Jesus is the life-giving vine, so may I plant my vines on the mountains of Samaria, so may I, by living, give to others, and in thus giving receive life. Thus our whole attitude toward God and man is changed. Our first thought now is not as to what we are receiving or may receive

from God ; all notion of receiving is crowded out by the larger truth of giving, till we look to our fellow-men as to those to whom we may give, and take no thought of receiving. The vine lives to give, and in giving receives life abundantly. So as I first bear fruit I become like him who is the vine, and in the very life-giving and fruit-bearing I receive life and receive it abundantly. "I am come that ye may have life." How? By giving life, by becoming the fruitful vine on the wall, whose branches hang over and kiss the limpid stream below, and whose fruit refreshes the weary traveler. This is the imagery of the Hebrew prophet, the imagery of divine truth, of one who is first the vine, giving life, cheer, sustenance to others, and thus in the very giving receives life from the eternal source of life itself.

So, when any soul takes hold of truth, he takes hold of God. It matters not whether it is a hod carrier in whom a drop of generosity quickens the lifeblood as he gives the cup of cold water, whether it is the clerk behind the desk, the book-keeper at his ledger, the business man in his counting-room, the carpenter at his plane ;

wherever there is the taking hold of truth, there is the taking hold of God, and once having received the touch of God, he is never the same man again. If I am told that if I am touched by sin I am never the same man again, why may I not be told the greater truth, that when I am touched with holiness, when I touch truth, when once I see God face to face, I am never the same man again ? The cup of cold water, the struggle after righteousness, the acquisition of mastery, the earnest desire after holiness however insignificant it may be,— all have become a part of my personal history, and I can never be again the man I was before the glory of God's righteousness fired my heart.

How stimulating is this thought ! I am not going to appeal to the sting of sin. Sin is negative ; it has nothing to do with God. I rather call your thought to this truth, that where you have taken hold once of righteousness you are not the same you were before, and never again can be. It is an eternal fact. No man can tear that cup of cold water from your history, however base and mean and despicable you may have been at some time in your life. Wher-

ever you have been noble, stretched the lame hand of faith and touched but the hem of the garment of the Sun of Righteousness, you have become what you never were before, and can never again be the same. It has entered into your personal history, and you are the richer for it. You are not the same man you were ten years ago. Oh, how you have struggled to overcome that habit ! It matters not what octopus it was which threatened your very life, the mastery you have gained is a fact, it is a taking hold of God, and that fact can never be eradicated from your being.

Because God has been with you through all these struggles, through all this contest ; been with you in the hour of partial victory and somewhat of conquest, the hour of attainment ; because he has been with you as, with painful fingers, you have scraped away the leaves and mould, pulled away the stone and rock, taken off the pressure of some great obstacle that was preventing your soul from springing up ; because he has been with you in those dark moments in the chill valley of your soul's history, experience, and development, have you not the sure hope that he

will be with you yet again? Do you not know it to be true? The worst is over; it matters not now what may come to your soul. It may be nail-prints, a cross, it cannot be so bad as what has gone before, because now you have more of God than ever, because you are not the same man you were, because your soul is not the same, and strength now is yours you had not then. You are the soul that dared to pluck its life from the burning and fly with it to God. This touch of genius must be well pleasing to your heavenly Father, well pleasing to behold in the son, in his child, in you, as he sees you dare to grasp your soul, and carry it to him to plant, to prune, to nurture, that it may grow and bud and bear fruit on the mountains of Samaria.

I long to have every soul feel that the best is yet to be; that nothing can separate us from the love of God, as it cannot from the life of Christ; that in every human soul there is a genius of spirituality; that every human life has within it the possibility of oneness with God; that this calm assurance rests in the very life, the very being of God. Oh, in that confidence, what courage you are going to feel in tak-

ing, planting, nurturing, caring for the vine of your soul! How strong you are going to be as you face all experiences and conditions ; with what spontaneity this new life, now awakened, grows ! How it laughs and sings in the dew and sunlight ; nay, also, when the wind and storm sweep over it, still it is safe, chants praises to its heavenly Father, who is in that cloud and storm now as he was in the past, and from that cloud and storm pours out his life in love, his strength in pity, and sustains the soul through all experiences that await it ere it enters the eternal presence of the great husbandman who planted the vine, Christ Jesus, the stem of Jesse, who planted human souls to grow as branches of the one vine.

O my soul, wait thou still upon God, for thou shalt yet plant thyself on the sunlit sides of the mountains of Samaria.

XV.

**PERSONAL FAITH THE GROUND
OF LIFE.**

If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins.—
ST. JOHN viii. 24.

25 October, 1891.

XV.

PERSONAL FAITH THE GROUND OF LIFE.

As if he might have said : " If ye believe that I am, ye must live in your holiness." There is something pathetic in watching the struggle of a life aglow with the courage of its convictions, striving to persuade men, striving to compel them to take hold of the truth. Why, it is truth that shall make you free. He that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin, but he that taketh hold of the Son is free, and if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Here is a life that believes in himself, entirely self-centred in the only true sense that life ever can be self-centred, as the sun in heaven is self-centred, feeling its own power, believing in its own power, striving through fog and cloud and mist and storm to manifest its own power. Here is a life self-poised, conscious of its

own wholeness, integrity, truth, and vitality ("which of you convinceth me of sin?"), striving to convince men that there is such a thing as life; striving to compel men to take hold of life; seeing in the great depth of the pity of his large heart man held in bondage by sin, men prostrated by powers over which they cannot gain the mastery, seeing human lives thus supinely overcome by the baser forces which contend for supremacy. With great pity, with the strong courage of conviction, he strives to hold forth life to these souls in such a way that they shall take hold of these vitalizing forces and escape from their bondage and enter into the largeness and fullness of the liberty of entire life for which they were made, for which they exist, and to which they ultimately shall come.

If it is pathetic to watch such struggles of a life so inspired by the courage of its convictions in endeavoring to impart this life to others, so, also, it is sublime. It is a sublime unfolding of the thought of Christ in this eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel: "Before Abraham was, I am." "If ye believe that I am, ye shall live in

your wholeness." A great gulf-current, so to say, of spiritual life, of vitalizing energy, circles the universe of human existence, where human life, coming to the surface, reaches forth its grasp, striving to take hold of life in its entirety, to enter into the freedom of perfect life, to escape from the waves that are threatening its very existence, and in this warm, vitalizing current of eternal life, which encircles the universe of human striving, is the life of Jesus. I mean by this that Jesus became conscious of this oneness of spiritual life, and, in the consciousness of the existence of that oneness of spiritual life, he realized that he himself was the manifestation of that life, so that it was not in any figure of speech that he said : "Before Abraham was, I am." He uses the strongest phrase possible to express his existence, not as our feeble translation has it, "If ye believe not that I am he," but "If ye believe not that I am." It is the same expression that he uses elsewhere when he says : "Before Abraham was, I am." It is the consciousness of the existence of a oneness of a vital current of life circling the universe of human existence, and in that consciousness realizing

that he himself is the highest expression of that life, that he himself is the manifestation of the eternal life of the universe.

Oh, what an overwhelming power it gives to the life to be persuaded, to be conscious of the existence of this vitalizing current, and to realize that this current finds its complete expression in himself ! No wonder, then, that he says : " Which of you convinceth me of the lack of life ? " " Which of you convinceth me of the defect of life ? " " Which of you convinceth me of not grasping life firmly ? " " Which of you convinceth me of being out of this current of life ? " " Which of you convinceth me of failure, of missing the mark of life ? " " Which of you convinceth me of sin ? " No wonder that he speaks of the entire freedom that there is within himself, and this without the slightest suggestion, — nay, it seems to jar upon our thought to even utter what I am to say, — without the slightest suggestion of spiritual pride, — the entire realization that in himself there is the fullness of life, where there can be no bondage. No man is held in bondage when he lives. No man can be bound hand and foot in any degree of

servitude who is welling up with life, life that will snap all restraints. Why, the tree as it grows will not be restrained by any bands or clamps that human ingenuity can devise. Life snaps all bondage, and the entire freedom of life is in Jesus and in his consciousness, in his realization. As he sees men despairing, or led in captivity by imbruting passions or demoralizing tendencies ; sees them led captive by small forces beneath their dignity ; sees men creeping as worms, or groping as four-footed beasts ; sees men living, not in the full dignity of their powers ; sees men besmeared with that which disfigures the rare beauty of the countenance illuminated by the rays of righteousness and holiness, how in great pity he longs to impart to them that which he, as the Son of Man, as a brother, as a kindred spirit, has in common with every human soul, — life, life self-centred, life self-poised, self-existent life. It is a self-existent life of which we take hold — this life of Christ of which we may have a part — because it is the life of God. He yearns that men shall take hold of this life, that they may be free, and if the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

It would not be freedom for you if he should ask you to escape from pain. Calvary stares him full in the face. Yet, with such a life as his, there cannot be shrinking from any cross. Therefore he asks you to escape from bondage, and so into freedom. He says to us and to all mankind,—for he cannot withhold this utterance from any soul that comes from God,—he says : “ If ye believe that I am, if ye believe in this vitalizing current, namely, this eternal life of God, manifested in me, ye must live in your holiness, and I, the Son of Man, shall make you free.”

There is no suggestion of arbitrariness about it. It is not as if Christ were standing as an arbitrary king to dole out favors, but it is as if he touched a great truth as an electric current, and, having touched it, this is the necessary outcome of it. And in the giving of that life there is escape from bondage, from servitude, from slavery ; there is the escape into freedom. The only way a man can be saved is by becoming a son of man, because to become a son of man is to link himself indissolubly,—say, rather, is to make himself a part of this life current, which is the life of God ;

and thus making himself a son of man he becomes, in the larger meaning, the child of God, and as he becomes a son of man and a child of God there is freedom and escape, because there is life. So, before Abraham was, this Jesus is. What a force to manifest itself in human experiences ! What a marvel that God should declare himself in such a way that men may learn the secret of life, that they may live forever and not die !

All religious striving, all pious aspiration, all thirsting for righteousness, all manifestation of the religious consciousness which has expressed itself in any era of the world's development, all these are not contrary the one to the other, but are as so many facets of a precious stone, till men are won by the beauty of the perfect jewel, Christ, and he thus becomes the universal life ; and his religion, nay, not religion, but his revelation, being the manifestation of the divine presence and life, must ultimately become universal. Not, perchance, as you and I have comprehended Christianity. We have not yet stated its full expression. But he who stood before the bewildered brethren, de-

claring himself the source of all life, self-existent before the days of Abraham, is the life of the human race, and in him all mankind are to find escape into freedom. Escape into freedom ! What a blessed deliverance !

What helps me just here is this, that there is in Christ,—for he is the ever-present, with him there is no past, no future,—there is in Christ a belief in himself. We do not now mistake the nature of that belief, but we recognize its existence, and I think that one of the first steps toward life and freedom is a belief in one's self as Christ believed in himself. We see intimations of this when we respect the righteousness that is within us, the first streaks of dawn, so to say, when the sun of righteousness rises within our horizon and we begin to value righteousness for righteousness' sake, virtue for virtue's sake, right for right's sake. We see intimations of this belief in ourselves in this first respecting the righteousness within us, and I think it is the first step we must take in the way of escape and life and freedom, namely, belief in ourselves.

For, oh, who are we ? Not that life

that links itself with the violet or the rose ; not that life that is kin to the brute, howsoever beautiful may be the manifestation of that animal life. We are children of the one Father, brothers of the one Christ, made in his image, sharers with him, partakers of the divine nature. Fancy the tremendous grasp it would have upon a man's soul if he could come to believe thus in himself : that he himself has a soul that is a sharer in the life of God, that he himself is a child of God, that he himself is a brother of Christ, that within him are the divine possibilities, that within him there is a possible escape into the full freedom of the sons of God. What a sweep there would be over the heart-strings which, now unstrung, discordant, out of tune, give such pathetic wails of discouragement, despair, sorrow, defeat. What a sweep there would be over the soul of man, producing a divine harmony and the sweet music of a free soul, could man but come to believe in himself.

I feel that we cannot believe in God until we believe in ourselves, for what is said generally is, I think, to be said specifically. "If a man love not his brother,

whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" If a man believe not in his brother whom he hath seen, how can he believe in the great elder brother, or in God, whom he hath not seen? So, specifically, if a man believe not in this personal life of which he is conscious, how can he believe in the life of the world — Jesus? How can he believe in God, whom he hath not seen? I know it is hard for you to believe in yourselves. I know how disfigured the possible beauty of your souls may have become, how you shrink from even the introspection that shall declare to you the true nature of your spiritual life. But beneath it all, removing all the débris of past failure, calamity, catastrophe, there is the divineness of the Father's life. God has given you of himself, you are his child, you are his offspring.

Oh, a man cannot contentedly stay in sin when thus he comes to believe in himself. If I could persuade a youthful spirit in whom I discerned the genius of an artist that these powers, though latent, were within him, he could no longer contentedly violate the laws of color and proportion,

strive after the merely clever, but, believing in himself, he must strive to the utmost to give expression to the life that is within him. And Christ, believing in himself, soars, so it seems to our limited vision, our restricted and withheld sight,—soars into the eternities, but on wings only belonging to his nature, because he has not only fellowship and companionship with God, but he has life with God ; and as he lives, so are we also to live ; and his flights into the eternities are into the mansions prepared by him for us.

The other thought that encourages us, supports and sustains us, is that our escape from bondage, our liberty, our life, our salvation, comes not only by taking this initial step of believing in ourselves, and the secondary step of believing in other human souls, thus deepening our charity, widening our sympathies, intensifying our interest in others ; but there is life for us only in believing also in Jesus, the Son of Man, the Son of God, the light and the life of the world. “ If ye believe not that I am, ye must perish, ye must die in your sins.” I cannot find life elsewhere. It is the universal life. It is the great life of God,

which so ramifies human life that there is not a soul that is not touched by this vitalizing electric current of life. In him we live and cannot die.

It is a personal matter, so personal that first we come to believe in ourselves, in that glorious faith that enables us to see what we are,—God's dear children. It is that faith that makes it possible for us to believe in and realize the value of other souls, and it is supremely that personal love and faith in Jesus our Saviour, who thus becomes in very truth our God. For thee, whom we have seen, O Jesus, we love and believe in, and in loving and believing in thee we are loving and believing in God whom we have not seen.

God speed the day, then, when we may believe Christ is, and because we believe he is we shall live in the righteousness that thus becomes ours, because it flows through him from the throne of God.

XVI.

RICHES OF GOD.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, . . . the things which
God hath prepared for them that love him.—

1 COR. ii. 9.

18 October, 1891.

XVI.

RICHES OF GOD.

WHAT a prophetic eye St. Paul had !
How he discerned the things of the Spirit !
Your eye and mine have not seen, into
your heart and mine have not entered, the
things which God hath prepared for them
that love him ; but into St. Paul's heart
these things had entered ; God has revealed
them to him by his Spirit. And what God
has done for St. Paul, God is now doing
for any and every human soul who will but
roll back the gates of his being and let the
tide of spiritual life flow in.

In other words, there is a revelation of
God to every individual, which shall become
a personal possession, a personal revela-
tion, the acquired property of every human
soul. And so we wait, you and I and all
of us, God's will ; you and I wait the pro-
cess of his unfolding of himself ; you and
I stand here waiting till God fills up our

souls with himself. The things that pertain to God, these are the things for which we wait, which he has prepared for them that love him ; these pertain to the spiritual life, to the possession of God ; they are the things that God hath revealed to us by his Spirit.

This is the spiritual process through which the soul is being led step by step. Every event that has come to you in your life has been the necessary preparatory event before the next unfolding of the life of God can be received by you. Little by little the curtain, so to say, is pushed back, just as fast as your vision is able to apprehend that which is being declared and revealed ; just as fast as you are able to have the curtain unrolled, so God is declaring himself, revealing himself, unfolding himself to you. Sometimes these events in your life have seemed to be cruel, unnecessary, almost the subverting of all spiritual attainment and growth, as if they were the pushing back of your onward movement ; to be like chains about your feet preventing the onward step, the cruel iron biting your tender flesh or staying your hands as they strive to take hold of life, yet only thus in

the seeming. Each event that has come to you, however seemingly painful, cruel, or unnecessary, — each event has been a necessary preparatory step that your soul might be in a condition to learn more and more of God.

Human souls are made as they are made, not as we, perchance, fancy they should be made. It is not within the limits of the possible that the human soul shall take in with one great apprehension all the things which God hath revealed, hath prepared, for them that love him. Man's capacity must be gradually acquired. He does not spring into the full attainment of his growth and acquisition. His capacity is not fully developed at the beginning. The little child must first creep and crawl before it can walk, lisp and babble before it can speak ; he comes first to see, then to apprehend, then to become with prophetic eye the possessor of a fuller, a larger vision of truth. It is so everywhere. Man does not spring into immediate possession of his powers and capacities in business, nor in literature, nor in the sciences, nor in any of the possible acquisitions before him. It is first the little taking hold, then

the larger grasp, till finally the full powers of the man are expanded to express the capacities of his soul for the reception of the fuller truth.

So God stands eager and ready to pour out himself, so man waits patiently the will of God and the extension of his own capacities, and sees in this waiting the necessary growth and development of the powers of his soul. So he receives every event that has come to him as a necessary step to the event that is to take place, and as he looks over his past life studded with blunders, mistakes, yes, sins and crimes, marked here and there by the pitfalls into which he has fallen, sees in all these events which seemed at the time so unnecessary, experiences through which his soul must pass for the reception of the larger, fuller, completer life which his God is waiting to pour into his soul.

Look back, yourself, over the events of your past life and ask, Has there been a moment in my past history when I have been in a position to receive such a measure of the power and glory of God as at present? You have lived up to this day by passing through certain cruel, painful

experiences. You have had sorrow, failure ; you have had yourself thrown back, as it were, upon yourself, and thus have found yourself thrown back upon the power and life of God. It is, of course, plainly true that the revelation of God has been made already to the very full. The sun shining in his heavens stands there ever shining, but the infant eye cannot apprehend the glory of the sun at once ; there are certain painful processes through which the eye must first pass. Christ has been revealed ; God has declared himself in many and multiform ways, but the soul cannot apprehend the fullness of the power and glory of God, save by its passing through certain preparatory processes. So, you are glad to welcome these processes as they come, because now you see their meaning. You are now standing upon the vantage ground which you have won, inch by inch, and, standing there, you are able to realize now somewhat of the power, the life, the love, the richness, of those things which God has revealed to you of himself by his Spirit.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,” but eye shall see and ear shall hear, and it

shall enter into the heart of man, this life of God, just so fast as eye is adjusted to the vision, ear quickened to the sound, and heart prepared for the revelation of the life, the unfolding of the power, the manifestation of the majesty of Almighty God. When that comes, — as come it shall, sooner or later, in the experience of every man's life; not, perhaps, to-day, nor to-morrow, nor ten, nor a hundred, nor a thousand years hence, but come it must, — but when that hour comes, behold, "all old things are passed away, and all things are become new."

All old things pass away. Why, the very God you had in your childhood is now lost to you in the larger, richer, fuller possession of him whom you now call "My God." You seem to stand now in a new heaven and on a new earth. You seem now to have a God of your own. He has become such that you now say, "Thou art my God and I will praise thee; thou art my God and I will exalt thee." If he is become to you a personal possession, a new God has come into your heart, a personal appropriation, a personal apprehension, a personal, actual property of your

own, as it were. You and God, God and you, the one with the other, the other with the one, standing alone in the world as if he were God only to you, and as if you were his only child. There comes such a nearness of the relation that your heart is filled with the richness and the riches of this outpoured life of himself.

As these new things come to you, so a new estimate of everything with which you come in contact is made also. The men now about you are new souls; there are new meanings of events, new understandings of the processes through which the soul passes. The soul has a new value to you, because you see in it the unfolding of the manifestation of the life of God. So wherever you see a human soul you look with eager searching eyes to read the revelation, the story, the manifestation, the unfolding of this infinite eternal living God of yours. No child that babbles, no youth that strives, no man who exerts the power of his manhood, no human soul expressing itself, comes before your life without a message of God to you. So that every man, every soul, every child, every human life, is now to you a word of God,

a ray of truth. Nay, every event in life, howsoever befogging it may seem, is an unfolding of the life of God, is the pouring into the human soul of the message of God. See how a new estimate is put upon the value of every human soul, how it quickens our interest in all human endeavors, our pity for every human transgression, increases our charity for every human soul as it struggles toward the light and toward larger life, and pants and thirsts and yearns for escape and freedom ; how it makes a new world of that in which you live.

Why is all this ? Because this manifestation of God is none other than the revelation of life ; in other words, none other than the manifestation of perfect manness, manhood. So where we take hold of an attribute of a man, of life, there we are taking hold of perfect manhood, taking hold of God ; and as, step by step, we pass through these painful processes and are able to take hold of anything that is good and true, wheresoever we are able to take hold of anything that is positive, there we are taking into our souls a fraction, so to say, of these infinite riches, of the perfect manhood, of the unfolding life of God.

It needs illustration. I need to tell you that when perhaps last week a great cloud of thick blackness shut down over your life, and despair was the only wail the soul was capable of uttering, because of failure, of transgression, of great affliction, of sorrow, of the evil that seemed to demand a supremacy in your nature, that was the moment when you were nearer to God, perhaps, than ever before ; and if in that moment of despair and weakness you were able to take hold of but the hem of the garment of perfect manhood, from the touch there came virtue, power, strength, — you were taking hold of God. So marvelous is this real and vital presence of Christ !

Oh, the richness of such a life, even in its apparent poverty ! How near to great riches is the soul when it is beggared of its own possessions, when all its estimates of value have been reversed, turned upside down, till now that which it once considered of the greatest value and to be striven after is held to be altogether worthless, and that which had been lost sight of now becomes the first thing to be desired !

It is the history of the human race con-

stantly, as it is the history of the individual soul, this taking of the physical as of the first importance; then later the outpouring of the life of God becomes the triumph in the ethical struggle of the spiritual over the physical. There comes a moment in a man's life when he ceases to regard the physical as of worth, and it is then that there is a triumph of the spiritual over the physical. It is the life of the spirit. It is the outcome of the ethical struggle, of the struggle for life, for mastery, for escape, for freedom, and when this life of God becomes the possession of man, when man, little by little, takes hold of these attributes of manness, of manhood, then he finds himself brought really and vitally into the presence of the one life who manifests, completely and entirely, the eternal life of God, and fills up to the very full man's soul with perfection, that is, with the life of the eternal righteousness.

Thus are we brought into the realm of the operation of the Spirit. "God hath revealed himself unto us by his Spirit." The child learns the alphabet, but it is not till the full processes of life have been gone through that, in his mature years, he

is able to apprehend the real meaning of the rich treasures of poetry. So we, in the infancy of our spiritual growth and development, learn the alphabet of the beginning of life, and are made acquainted with the historic Christ, know him in a measure; but it is not till the great soul-processes have been gone through that the soul comes to learn the deep things of God, to know Jesus truly and vitally, comes into the possession of the life of that perfect manhood, into the acquisition of that manhood as applied to human life, into the knowledge of the things God has prepared for them that love him, and which are made known to him only by the Spirit and through the processes of the Spirit alone, which are the way of the development of the soul as it is brought into communion, and into clear vision, with God and of God.

So we wait for God's will, you and I,—not with painful patience, but with patient joy, knowing that all things work together for good to them that love him. There can be but one outcome of love. There can be but one result to the soul that loves righteousness, takes hold of truth.

"If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast ; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day."

There can be but one outcome in the great struggle for life, — the outcome of escape from bondage, the freedom of the soul as it wings its flight into the very presence of the effulgence of the great glory of the eternal righteousness of God, and is now able to see him face to face, — him who before was beheld darkly because of the mists, whether of transgression or doubt, or of uncertainty, or of indifference, darkly because of the clouds that arose between the soul and the face of the always loving Father. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

This revelation is going on all the time. It is the blessed gospel of good tidings which Christ brings to you. He stands before you in the infancy of your spiritual life, and you behold somewhat of his beauty, — the beauty of his character, the great richness of his holiness ; but, more and

more as he stands before you, as in the great struggles of your life you pass on with ever-increasing capacity for truth and life, he pours into you more and more of himself, till there come moments when the Christ-life is filling you up to the full. The life of love, of gentleness, of uprightness, of integrity, so fills you that your life is hid with Christ in God, and Christ in you becomes the ground, as well as the hope, of your ultimate glory. Glory as it seems to me is none other than this, the irradiation of the soul in the high noon blaze of its spiritual power and activity. Therefore in this gradual acquisition of the Christ-life in you there is the ground, the hope, of your ultimate manifestation, the ground of your ultimate shining forth in the fullness of your spiritual powers, in the complete glory of a son of God.

How rich, oh, how unspeakably rich, must such souls be ; for so filled with Christ they are giving, though unconsciously, Christ to others.

Is there not a new God for you to-day ? Is he not the one to whom your soul cries out, " My God ; " and does not your soul say to him, " My God, I wait, and through all

these painful events of life I still wait, in the full assurance, nay, in the sure knowledge, that thou art opening wide the windows of my soul that thou mayest shine into its very deepest recesses with the fullness of thy life"?

Do you not say, "Now, O my soul, wait thou for Christ to come, more and more," till he take complete possession as the fullness of the Godhead bodily, filling up every recess, every possible part of your soul, so filling it that your will and heart and love and mind and thought are at one with him? Thus becoming through Christ one with God, you find your freedom, your escape, your final salvation.

XVII.

ENTERING BY FAITH.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate. — ST. LUKE xiii. 24.

16 November, 1891.

XVII.

ENTERING BY FAITH.

THIS spiritual energy that manifests itself in striving is the first element of freedom. We were born for freedom ; we came into the world to become, in all the largeness and fullness of the meaning of the term, sons of God. Nothing short of the realization of this boundless, limitless, spiritual life can ever satisfy the demands of the being of the human soul ; and man must say : "For this purpose came I into the world, that I might be free." Whatsoever, therefore, is holding man in captivity is alien to his nature, and needs one day or other to be stripped off. It is a chain, a shackle, a sign of bondage. This spiritual force, this energy which strives, which agonizes (for this is what it means), for life, as a competitor in a race strives, agonizes to reach what he feels to be the possible goal, is the ground of liberty.

No man throws himself into a race without the thought that the goal is possible to be reached, and the very striving that he makes, the very beginning of this striving, the very energy that thus wells up within him, that makes the striving possible, is, as it were, the first step in the race,—better than that, the first element within him of his freedom.

When there is a loss or an absence of this striving, when there is such a decay of this spiritual force and energy that there is no effort, no conscious uplifting of life, nay, worse than that, not even the desire of effort and of striving, then the plummet has been dropped to the very lowest depth which the human soul is capable of experiencing, desire sunk, buried, lost, no uplifting of spiritual force sufficient to stir the calm, placid surface of indifferent apathy, the stillness, as it were, of death. Pity the soul when he reaches that deep where there is only apathy, where no desire can cause even a bubble of energy, of effort, of striving to reach the glassy surface of a life lost in despair. So that the very first striving, the very first realization, as it were, of a new life, the very beginning of the

expression of this spiritual energy, is the first element of a man's freedom.

How that striving is to be kindled; how that desire is to be again set aglow; how that energy is to be called forth into manifestation and expression, must be determined by the characteristics peculiar to the individual. In one man, perchance, who long since has strayed from his father's home, the thought that a mother still prays, a mother's love still remembers, that a mother's heart still agonizes for the welfare of the child who once was folded to her bosom, — such a recollection, such a calling back of old-time memories, may be the incentive of desire, the inception of energy, the quickening of a life that shall manifest itself in striving. But, howsoever this awakening shall be called forth, whenever it comes, whenever there is the first quickening expression of this new life, the first coming to the birth of an energy striving for expression, there, at that instant, the first element of freedom has been acquired.

We may turn this about and say that until there is a striving, man is still in his bondage. Until life begins to pulsate, to

throb, to express, to manifest itself ; until there be an inspiration that shall breathe upon the dying embers of desire, fanning them into a quickening flame ; until a man desire escape, desire freedom and strive after it, he is still in bondage. He is, as it were, a great giant, prostrate, bound hand and foot, mouth stopped, breath gone, silent in the dust. Galvanized life may be forced into him, and he may arise and walk the streets and pursue his various avocations, but the life which is properly his, which is peculiarly his, which is his by birth, which he should vindicate by expressing to the full, is dead, because the desire, the striving, the expressing of the energy within him, has not as yet taken place.

Alas, how many of us are thus spiritually dead ! How many of us are living but an artificial life ! How many of us are thus non-vital in our goings in and comings out, are thus living merely the semblance of a life, God only, in his loving wisdom, knows, and in that same loving, pitying wisdom cares, and will not suffer us to long continue so. It may be that that darkest moment when desire, even as a faint spark, has be-

come extinguished, and a thick black darkness, in the absence of this faint glimmer of desire, has taken possession of the soul, — it may be that that instant was God's opportunity, that then there was the beginning of a new life; desire again began to appear and energy began to stir within the prostrate form, till the man, first creeping, then raising himself to his feet, strove with a mighty, agonizing striving to enter into the strait gate. It is encouraging to think that when a man has touched the very bottom of this awful deep of spiritual apathy, it may be a rich moment, paradoxical as it may sound, in his spiritual experience, in the process of the development of his soul; mighty contrasts of values may appear and desire be awakened. Howsoever a man may be living, he is not living truly and vitally until the energy of his spiritual life manifests itself in some desire and striving for the possible attainment of his being.

This exhortation to striving, this call that comes from the Saviour's lips, is not an appeal to apathy, to vacancy of will, to an enervation caused by spiritual transgression. Have I not said enough to make

it quite apparent without further elaboration that while this apathy lasts a man is not living ; that while there is a vacancy of will, the human soul, as such, is not being true to its possibilities ; that while a man is spiritually debilitated and enervated by clinging to his transgressions he is in the very bondage of helplessness ? So that this appeal is not to man's apathy, not to that spiritual enervation, which is caused by, and continues because of, a life of spiritual transgression, which we call sin, but it is a deeper call ; it is an appeal to desire, which is the starting-point of the highest, noblest, and best that there is within us. It is the call of the Son of God to a son of God. It is "Child of God, son of man, brother of Christ," — it is the call to the human soul as such, as a partaker of the divine life, — "Son of man, arise, stand on thy feet." So that this striving — oh, how discouraging at times it has been to you ! — yet this striving, be well assured of this, is the first element of your freedom. Thank God for it. Praise him that it has expressed itself within you. Blessed be his name that there is within you the striving at this moment for largeness and fullness of life.

Sometimes, however, this striving is misdirected, looks in wrong directions for its proper manifestation, is led astray by false notions as to how the striving may accomplish its best results. Sometimes, as in the case of the drunkard, the dipsomaniac, the gambler, — the man who is led in captivity by these and other lusts of the flesh, — sometimes this striving for freedom and escape is asked to secure its freedom by artificial methods, extraneous appliances, as if we were to shut out of mind the teaching of the analogue of nature, whereby we perceive that nothing of life comes from without.

The tree buttressed by extraneous supports is not thereby vitally increased in its strength. We may prop up a building, because it is not vital; but the tree, to grow strong, must have strength at its roots, its vitality must well up from within, as the vital sap rushes through trunk and limb to twig and leaf, and in that strength which comes from within the tree its entire freedom is made possible and realized. This everlasting analogue must be kept in mind whenever the thought of man is in danger of being deluded by false possibilities that

help, strength, support can come from without. Environment may sometimes aid, but may never give life. I may build round the young sapling a wall to protect its infant life, but that does not give life to the tree. I may cover with glass the tender shoot, and that may protect it from pelting storm, driving rain, biting, cutting sleet ; but that does not give life to the growth which I am caring for. So there may be many things to which we may give the name environment, which may help and minister to certain possibilities of realization, yet the growth and strength must always come from within. The appeal must ever be made to the spiritual depths of the soul. Let us do what we can in the way of removing needless temptation ; but, in the removing of temptation, let us always understand that this is not the coming of life, — it is merely building a fence or wall about the life, which may serve a protective purpose, but no other.

Entering into the strait gate is through the righteousness of a person. I have had much to say — and I hope I may have strength to say it again and again, often and often, to the very end — of the personal

element as it has to do with our spiritual life. I have called your thought to the person of Christ, and this because the very nature of the striving is the realization of the righteousness of God. I am conscious that this is strong language. I understand what it implies,—that we are sons of God, parts of God. Will you misunderstand me if I say that we are gods? Christ said it. And it seems to me indubitably, everlastingly true that the end of this striving, the destiny of it, the goal of it, is the realization of the righteousness of God, that we are made for this righteousness, that this righteousness is possible one day or other, some time or other, somehow or other. Salvation cannot be confined to a smaller significance than this,—the entire escape and freedom into the absolute realization of the righteousness of God. Therefore, this entering into the strait gate of righteousness, of life (that is the apparent meaning ; it needs no analysis, or exegesis, or elaboration), must be through a person, through the righteousness of a person.

It must be a living, vitalizing, and vital faith, belief, trust in the righteous one, Christ. So that justification by faith is

the entering into the being of Christ. It is the striving and the entering. It is the losing of the life in the life of another. It is going into the being of another. It is abiding in the being of another. It is being clothed by the life of another, and so the righteousness of another. So that being justified by faith is not a judicial, forensic justification ; it is not a substituted justification. That is impossible, unvital, negative. But it is the actual being in Christ.

Note how self, dwelling alone with itself, is poverty. Note how sin is a violating of soul-laws, — and soul-laws is only our way of saying soul-manifestation ; strictly speaking, there is no such thing as law, for law is only the jotting down, the record, the report of our observation of the processes of nature, whether spiritual or physical, so that the term law is at the best a term of accommodation, — note how the violation of soul-laws has always a cutting-off nature, a separating, isolating nature, leaving the soul standing alone in its beggarliness, its poverty, its guilt, its shame. Then note that a justification by faith, an entering into righteousness, is by the self being lost

in the self of another who is worthy of it. So that our life is hid with Christ in God ; that is to say, he, being worthy of receiving us, his righteousness being whole righteousness as ours is fragmentary, — he, the righteous one, being capable of receiving us, worthy of our dwelling in him, is the one in whom we live ; and being in Christ is possessing riches. Oh, the unspeakable riches of Christ !

This faith, then, is the very enthronement of life. It cannot be an arbitrary matter, as he who should say, "It is an intellectual process by which we assent to certain statements, creeds, or dogmas." That is artificial, as if the sapling were to say to the tree, "This is a tree. This tree grows, buds, blossoms, bears fruit, refreshes the weary and the hungry by its fruitage." That is but assenting to certain truths which are truisms. It intellectually apprehends this unquestionable truth as to the tree. But the sapling, to live, must live as the tree lives. It must lose its life in the same life-current that wells up within the trunk and limbs, the vitalizing forces of the tree.

So that the faith which is accomplishing righteousness in us is a faith that is not

conscious of its being faith at all. When we are to walk in newness of life we are to forget our own lives, forget even our faith, and have our thoughts centred on the life worthy of us. Nor must we look down at the abyss over which our cautious steps are bearing us, lest thus looking we become conscious of ourselves, and slipping pitch headlong, by reason of our realization of our own self-consciousness. He who thus values faith as faith has not faith, because he has turned from Christ to himself, from Christ to his own being, his own nature. It is selfness asserting itself, and thus driving out the possibility of selflessness, for selfness is self-realization in its unreal sense. Therefore, he who is thinking most of his faith, either as to its nicety of expression or as to the exactitude of its utterance, or as to its power by which it may accomplish certain results, — in whatsoever form this self-complacency of a perfect faith presents itself as being entitled to admiration and respect, that very moment it ceases to be faith, and becomes artificial, unreal, unvital, and cannot speed the soul on toward the realization of its possibilities, toward the fulfillment of the righteousness of God.

But when the soul is lost in Christ, lost in an absolute thinking of Christ and a forgetting of self, an absolute trust and faith in the righteousness of God, then, plunged beneath that flood of the blood of Christ, — that is, the life, the vitalizing, energizing force and power of the righteousness of God as it comes to us in Christ, — it is washed of its guilt, as the tree is washed of its guilt when its enswathement is stripped off and the new bark takes its place. So we, disrobed of our sin and transgression, are clothed upon by the righteousness of God.

In the soul's onward movement toward the goal not the universe can stay it, not the power of man or angel can hinder or let it, because now its life is lost in the fullness of a life which is at one with God's ; and the universe and all its powers, not only not staying, not hindering it, but bidding it "Godspeed," are ministering to its progress and advancement. For it is going the way of the universe. It is going the way of righteousness, and in that going it finds it is at one with him whose striving found realization and fulfillment when in Gethsemane he strove, agonized, till he

could bring his will into absolute oneness with the will of God and say, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

For this you are born, to be free in the freedom of the realization of the life of Christ. This oneness with Christ as he is one with God is your life. His life-blood is the blood that pardons guilt, that clothes the nakedness of shame. It is this faith in him that washes the soul white and clean, that brings new life into the paralyzed limbs, new flesh upon the leprous frame, new power into the enervated, prostrated spiritual form. This crying out to us to strive to enter the strait gate is the calling to the great giant whom God has made for great things, and is the bidding him, — "Son of man, arise, stand on thy feet."

Oh, then, may we not strive, strive with a great agonizing force and power, to enter into the righteousness, into the life and power of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord !

XVIII.

NO SEPARATION FROM THE LOVE OF GOD.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life . . . shall
be able to separate us from the love of God.—

Rom. viii. 38, 39.

8 November, 1891.

XVIII.

NO SEPARATION FROM THE LOVE OF GOD.

WHO shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, transgression, famine, nakedness, the sword? For we are more than conquerors in all these things through him that loved us, because love is the greatest gift of God to man. The capacity for receiving love, the ability to express it, makes of man a creator; it brings him into oneness with the creative forces of God, and he himself becomes filled with the creative power.

As heat is the sun in operation, so is love God in manifestation ; and as nothing in heaven or earth may shut out heat in its operation, and so cut off the efficacy of the sun, so here we have an analogue of God in operation through love, for love is not only "the sunlight of peace," it is the very power of the sun, the very force of God, ramifying in every direction all the

forms of life, and producing in creative power oneness with God himself.

Am I not right, then, in being persuaded that love is the greatest gift of God to man, both in capacity and in expression, the ability to receive, and the ability to make manifest, the ability to throw wide the portals of the heart and let in the streams of God's eternal sunshine, his continued light of mercy and peace, — and the ability to manifest from the impelling power of the heart this same divine operation of love? It is man's highest achievement, as it is the indication of his highest glory, this reception of love, and this ability to express it.

When man has so succeeded in laying bare the deepest recesses of his soul that he may take in, in all its fullness, the vital power of the love of God, and in something like a similar fullness give expression to it, then he has reached the sublimest height of which he is capable; then he has justified his existence. For the first moment in his life he has arisen to his feet and stood there in all the dignity, majesty, and sublimity of a son of man; he stands for the first time in his life a redeemed,

liberated, free being; he has become one with him who says: "I and the Father are one."

What sublime sunlit heights are these to which man may fly as a bird escaped from the fowler? What achievements are these which shall bring man into creative oneness with the Almighty Sun of righteousness, who manifests himself in life-giving power, encircling the globe with his creative force?

Hence St. Paul says: "I am persuaded of this love of God; I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, can separate me and us, and all mankind, from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Why, if a man were to have held before him to-day, as in a silver cup, lined with gold, all the rare precious gems the world has so known as to give them names because of their great preciousness and value,—if these were held out to him, the tangible riches of the world, they would be as nothing in comparison with this creative power of love that is held before him as the possibility which shall make him at one with God.

I magnify the power of love, because I see it is the highest name we may give to God ; because I see that one who is the Son of Man, the elder brother of us all, has exemplified that power, manifested that power, is the embodiment of that power, and is, in very truth, one with him, the Father of all love. I magnify this force, this potency, this creative energy of love, to the utmost, because I see in it the only way of man's justification, the only way of man's expression of his entire being ; because I see in it the only way of escape from man's prison-house, the only way of his entering into that large liberty of the sons of God. I see in this energizing force, vitalizing power, man's highest achievement, that which brings him into oneness with Christ and with God. I magnify this force because of the necessity that lies upon every human soul to strive after its reception, to strive endlessly after its expression, to yearn with a great desire, to be thus one with God. Neither death nor life shall separate us from this love of God, because it has a double manifestation. It is the capacity for loving on our side, and it is the capacity for loving on

God's side. Man has within him this ability to love, to express his love, and until he has acquired the power of manifesting that love, he is paralyzed in certain functions of his soul, a great leprosy is seizing the very life of his spiritual nature, making useless their forces. There is, then, the necessity on man's part of love, and not death itself shall separate him from this power of expressing love. There are things that creep upon him, which are of the nature of spiritual death,—malice, malignity, transgression, the desire of pulling down the one who stands in his path, hindering his progress and achievement, the bitterness of discord, the fierceness of cruelty unbridled and unchecked, the unforgiving, relentless spirit; but even all these shall not separate man from God's love. They are shutting God out of man's life, for while man is in this state of discord, in this state of malice, suffering hatred to take possession of his soul, then he is, in the very nature of things, shutting out the capacity for the large expression of his life, because he is shutting out his ability to love God. No man can love God whom he hath not seen, while hating his brother

whom he hath seen. No man can fill his lungs with poison and pure air at the same moment. No man can take hold of hatred, unforgiveness, all these evil powers of the soul which dwarf and belittle and starve it, and at the same moment express in any degree the fair possibilities of his spiritual nature. For he is binding his spiritual nature with the hard cords of malice, binding it hand and foot, so that it cannot rise into the dignity of manhood — into oneness of sonship with God. He is bound by hatred to death! In a word, I wish I could make you see that hatred is damnation.

Oh, the necessity of forgiveness, and of thus coming into the eternal presence of God, where we may rest in abiding peace! But not even this spiritual death of malignity, of hatred, of malice, though it shut God out of our hearts, can shut us out of the infinite, tender, pitying, loving heart of God. When you are most demonlike, though your sin of hatred be as scarlet, God cannot tear you from his heart. There are heartstrings of infinite love that encircle you, arms of infinite pity that hold you, hateful, sinful, perverted as you are,

—arms that hold you in a never-yielding grasp.

Nor yet can the spiritual death of your sinful conduct separate you from God's love. God loves on, though your own love for him is destroyed by your sin. Run through the category of past transgression, and in every instance you must find that sin drives out love. If I steal or bear false witness against my neighbor, I am not loving, I am not vindicating my title to be a son of man. But, though sin tears at the soul-bands that bind me to the great heart of God, so tears at them that they are, seemingly, to snap ; though my actual transgression tugs at the very anchor chains which bind me to the rock of ages ; though I am, as it were, tugged at as the moon tugs at the tides, scattered hither and thither up and down the "everlasting beach of things ;" though thus in my sinning I am, as it were, snatching to pull down the lights in heaven, the stars of wisdom, and bringing into my soul black, thick darkness, obscuring the light of heaven itself ; though thus in my sinning I am undermining my own integrity, doing violence to my spiritual possibilities, driving out, crowd-

ing out love for God, yet not even this spiritual death of actual transgression can separate me from the love of my Father !

"God ! Thou art love ! I build my faith on that !
Even as I watch beside thy tortured child
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble."

If Jesus had never uttered any other word than to give us the parable of the prodigal son, he would have everlastingly compelled our gratitude, to tell us that though we are companioning with the swine, yet, whosoever that moment of self-realization shall come, and we come to ourselves and take one step toward his forgiving heart, then he will run and throw his arms about our necks and enfold us in his forgiving, pitying embrace, for nothing can separate even a sinful heart and life from this love of God.

Men are taking hold of riches, of power, of invention, of attainment, of achievement ; we see the progress of the race in civilization, of the individual in acquiring powers, the multiplicity, the enlargement, the widening scope and sphere of man's activities ; but all these multiform phases

of life often shut out the love of God ; and man, in his prosperity, forgets mercy, generosity, kindness, pity, tenderness, helpfulness, fellowship, love.

Yes, the rich can enter the kingdom of heaven, though burdened with great packs of jewels and bent low with the load of great acquisition. It is quite within the limits of the possible. Rich men may enter the kingdom of love and mercy and pity and righteousness, the kingdom of heaven, even as the overloaded pack mule may squeeze through that narrow and lacerating pass of jagged rocks which is known, because of its narrowness, as the "Needle's Eye." Yet not even the danger of riches, the shutting-out power of prosperity ; not even the dangers of spiritual pride, which come by reason of man's attainments and acquisitions, — not even these soul-destroying forces, which make a true spiritual life to seem almost shut out of possible grasp, can separate us from his love.

God's pruning hand will never forget in love our prosperity. In his great love for us he will not forget to cut us back. When the proper moment comes, this rich bear-

ing vine hanging over the walls with great purple clusters, this wealth, reputation, or success, even these God will cut back, and in the winepress we may alone tread out the wine of life, till it becomes possible for us to take the cup pressed out in grief and sorrow and drink it gladly, cheerfully, to the last drop, for it is the wine of God's love which could not let us live longer without him. Thus are we forced back upon God.

Therefore was not St. Paul right when he was persuaded that nothing could separate us from the love of God which we have in Christ Jesus our Lord? Have we not seen how necessary love is to save us from malignity, from unforgiveness, from malice? How necessary love is to tear away the prison bars which hatred has made fast to hold in captivity our spiritual lives? Have we not seen the necessity of love, the sharp knife of love, to cut the withes that are binding the soul so that it cannot escape to God? How necessary it is that we should love Christ!

For who is Christ? He is the life of God made manifest. He it is who has shown us what man is, — "man in his birth, God in

his deathlessness ; " man in his weakness, God in his capacity for living and loving. Do we not owe gratitude to this Christ who thus has shown us what man is, and not only what man is, but has so exemplified in himself all the forces of manhood that he stands as the Son of Man ? And when he stands as the perfect Son of Man, the elder brother, he is showing us how living on such Apennine heights brings us where we may be illuminated and cheered by the sun of God's love striking out clear and warm from what had seemed to us a black cloud of great darkness ; enabling us to see that on such a height we are brought into vital contact with the love of God, and may be one with Christ, as he is one with the Father.

When, therefore, in the oneness of that relationship you receive this mighty power of love, then in your new, vitalizing, life-giving power you bless where before you cursed, you exchange for the girdle knife the branch of olive, you build up where before you tore down, give life where once you were sowing the seeds of death, restore where once you destroyed. You in your new power, like God, are bring-

ing peace on earth, good will to men. You are bringing life in its fullness,—the life which has saved you and is now saving your brother also.

“I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“I know Thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
It were too strange that I should doubt Thy love.”

THE END.

